



# Fun **First** Foods

An easy guide to introducing solid foods

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### UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

UNICEF is the world's leading children's charity. The Baby Friendly Initiative provides training and assessment for hospitals and community health services to enable them to give breastfeeding mothers the help and support they need to breastfeed successfully. Visit [www.babyfriendly.org.uk](http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk)

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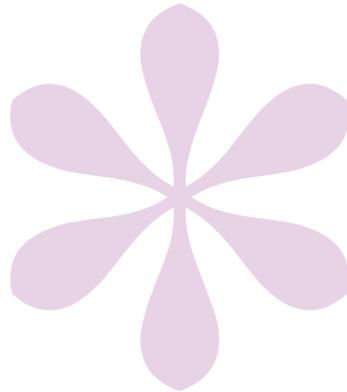
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# How this booklet will help you

As a parent, you want the best start for your baby. What your baby eats and drinks is important for her health now and in the future.

The information in this booklet may be quite different from what you have read before, or from what your friends and family may tell you. New research is always being carried out into feeding babies and the information and advice in this leaflet is based on the most recent findings. It will help your baby to get the best possible start.

## What is weaning?

Weaning means introducing a variety of foods gradually to your baby alongside her usual milk until she is eating the same healthy foods as the rest of the family. Sometimes this is called 'starting solids'.

For the sake of consistency we have used 'she' or 'her' throughout the booklet.



## **When is the best time to introduce solid foods?**

Introducing solid food is an important milestone in a baby's development much like walking and talking. It helps your baby learn about textures, flavours and eating together. Health experts now recommend that babies should start eating solid foods from around the age of six months. For the first six months, all the nourishment your baby needs comes from breast milk (or infant formula), but after six months she will need more nutrients than milk alone can provide, for example, iron. You should aim to gradually increase the variety and amount of solid foods so that, by 12 months, food rather than milk is the main part of her diet. This will help your baby to grow and develop properly.

## **What are the advantages of weaning at six months?**

Before six months your baby's immune and digestive systems and kidneys are still developing. Waiting until six months will make sure these systems are developed enough to cope with solid foods. Weaning too soon may also increase the risk of being overweight in childhood. Weaning is easier at six months because you can use soft finger foods or mashed foods. There is no need to puree. Also, bowls and spoons do not need to be sterilised.



## **What about bigger babies – won't they need solid food earlier?**

It doesn't really matter what weight your baby was at birth – the digestive system, immune system and kidneys of babies develop at the same rate regardless of their weight. There's no need to introduce solid food earlier just because your baby weighs more than other babies of her age. If she seems particularly hungry at any time, she may be having a growth spurt and extra breastfeeding or infant formula will be enough to meet her needs. Even if your baby is not sleeping through the night when she had been previously, there is no evidence to suggest that weaning earlier will help. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your health visitor.

## **My older sister weaned her children at four months and they're fine – why can't I?**

Weaning from four months was the advice given for a number of years, but the new guidance of six months is based on more recent research and is supported by the World Health Organization and the Scottish Government. You may not see an immediate difference in your baby's health compared to other babies that are weaned earlier, but you can be confident that you are giving your baby the best chance to have good health throughout her life.

**If you choose to wean at any time before six months, there are a number of foods which should be avoided. Please see page 26 for a list of these foods. You should never wean before four months (17 weeks).**

## Premature babies

If your baby was born prematurely, ask your paediatrician, health visitor or paediatric dietitian for advice about what is best for your baby.

## How do I know when my baby is ready to start solid foods?

Every baby is different but there are some signs that your baby is ready to move on to solid foods. These are:

- \* she can stay in a sitting position and hold her head steady
- \* she can reach out and grab things accurately; for example, look at food, pick it up and put it in her mouth all by herself
- \* she can swallow food. Babies who are not ready will push their food back out so they have more on their face than in their mouths.

If your baby is looked after by someone else during the day, e.g. a grandparent, childminder or nursery, this should not affect how you wean your baby. You should discuss your feeding routine with them to ensure they do the same thing as you.

Remember, this booklet has the most up-to-date information on weaning. You may want to share it with the person who is helping to look after your baby.



# What to eat?

Weaning is a time for learning about foods and getting used to eating.

Your baby will learn that:

- \* foods come in different colours, flavours and textures
  - \* some foods are eaten from a spoon, while other foods can be held and eaten with her hands
  - \* some drinks come from a cup.
- \* You should continue with breastfeeding or formula milk (whey-based first milk) while gradually introducing solid foods. Solid foods should be offered to your baby after her usual milk feeds.

For a healthy diet, babies should be encouraged to eat a variety of foods from each of the following four food groups:

## **Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods**

These foods are important sources of energy, vitamins and minerals and should be a major part of your baby's diet. This group also includes low-sugar (plain) breakfast cereals, sweet potatoes, porridge, noodles, couscous, yams, plantains and chapattis.





## Fruits and vegetables

These are a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals that are essential for your baby's health. They should also be a major part of your baby's diet. You can use fresh, tinned, dried and frozen fruit, and vegetables. If you buy tinned

fruit, choose fruit in natural juice as this is better for your baby's teeth than tinned fruit in syrup.

If you buy tinned vegetables, buy those that don't have any added salt.



Soft fruits and vegetables are ideal first foods. You could try mashing a banana, pear or a cooked carrot. You could also offer them sliced up as finger foods.

To reduce the risk of choking:

- \* remove any stones or pips before serving
- \* halve or chop small fruits and vegetables like cherry tomatoes and grapes
- \* cut large fruits into slices rather than chunks.



To encourage your baby to eat fruits and vegetables, eat them yourself. A baby loves to copy her parents.

## Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein



These foods are important for your baby's growth and development and include lean red meat, white fish, oily fish (for example, mackerel, salmon and tinned sardines), chicken, eggs and pulses (beans, peas and lentils, etc.). Quorn™ and tofu are also good sources of protein. Avoid processed meats as they are high in salt.

## Milk and dairy foods

These foods contain calcium which is needed for strong bones and teeth. They also provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals for your baby. Dairy foods are made from milk, e.g. cheese and yogurt. Make sure you use full-fat dairy products such as full-fat plain yogurt, full-fat fromage frais and full-fat cow's milk when cooking, e.g., cheese sauce, custard, rice pudding and semolina.



Babies up to the age of 2 have smaller appetites compared to older children and adults. They need foods that are high in energy, and so need more fat in their diets. After that they can gradually move to a lower-fat diet – the same as the rest of the family. You can use vegetable oils such as olive or sunflower oil for cooking, and vegetable margarine (e.g. sunflower) on bread or toast fingers.



## Food safety

- \* Wash your hands before preparing your baby's food and wash your baby's hands before she eats.
- \* Make sure the area where the food will be prepared is clean. Keep pets away from this area.
- \* Clean any tabletops or trays with a clean cloth before and after feeding.
- \* Carefully wash all bowls, spoons, feeding cups and any containers used in hot soapy water. You can also use a dishwasher.
- \* All fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly before use. This includes pre-packed items.
- \* Make sure all meat is properly cooked. This is especially important for chicken and minced meat. It should be cooked until steaming hot, there is no pink in the middle and the juices run clear.
- \* Heat only the amount of food you need and throw away any uneaten or leftover heated food.
- \* Make sure you stir and test any heated food before giving it to your baby.
- \* Make sure you don't use food past its use-by date. Follow the instructions on the food labels.
- \* Food that you have prepared should be kept chilled in a fridge (below 5°C) and eaten within two days.
- \* Frozen food should be thoroughly defrosted before reheating and do not refreeze any leftover food.
- \* Reheated food should be heated until it is steaming hot all the way through and then cooled before offering it to your baby.

# Getting started

## How to start

Health experts now recommend that babies should start eating solid foods from around the age of six months, when they show signs of being ready (see page 5). Choose a time of day when you and your baby are relaxed. It is best to offer your baby her usual milk feeds first. There is no right way, just the way that suits you and your baby. After a couple of weeks you will find a pattern that suits you both. You will need a bib for your baby, a soft spoon and a bowl (these should be clean but do not need to be sterilised if your baby is over six months old). Your baby may prefer to pick up finger foods directly from a clean tabletop or tray.

## What to expect

Eating is fun and your baby will learn this too! Try not to worry too much about mess. Your baby may spit food out the first couple of times – this is quite normal, just wait and try another day. Some babies take to it quickly, some take longer. Some are more choosy and you may need to offer a new food several times before it is accepted. Many babies are slow to eat at the beginning; be patient and let her take it at her own pace.

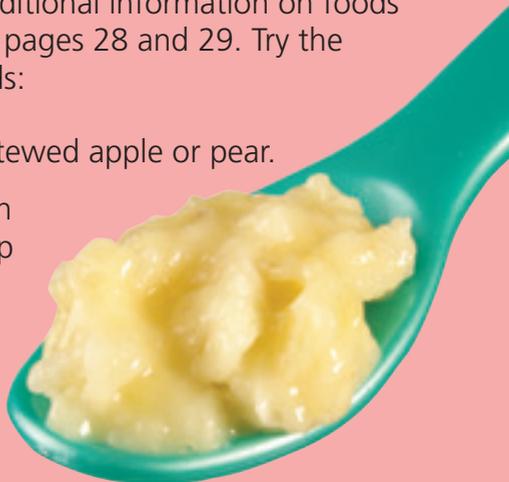
**Remember:** Your baby can pick up how you are feeling, so if you are nervous, she may be too.



## First foods

Foods that commonly cause allergies should be introduced one at a time, starting with just a small amount, and not before your baby is six months old. For additional information on foods mostly likely to cause allergies, see pages 28 and 29. Try the following suggestions for first foods:

- \* Mashed fruit such as banana, stewed apple or pear.
- \* Mashed cooked vegetables such as potato, carrot, parsnip, turnip or cauliflower.
- \* Small pieces of soft fruit or cooked vegetables such as melon, carrot or sweet potato.
- \* Toast, bread, pitta bread or chapatti, rice cake or breadstick.
- \* Cheese, slices of hard boiled egg or chunks of cooked fish which she can pick up (be careful to remove all bones from cooked fish).
- \* Plain baby rice or other cereal mixed with her usual milk (expressed breast milk or formula) – always in a bowl, not in her bottle. If your baby is six months or over, full fat cow's milk can be used to mix with cereal, but not to drink. There is further information on drinks on page 22.
- \* Use mashed-up healthy family foods where possible – do not add any sugar or salt.



Mashed banana

Some of these foods are not recommended until your baby is six months old. If you have decided to wean your baby before six months, there is more information on page 26.

## How often and how much?

- \* Start with a small amount of food at one meal each day, either mashed or finger food.
- \* Gradually increase the amount.
- \* Be guided by your baby's appetite, for example, she may want a few teaspoons of well-mashed food or a few pieces of finger food.
- \* Allow your baby to feed herself, using her fingers as soon as she shows interest.
- \* Offer her a range of foods and textures.
- \* Don't force her to take the food – if she doesn't seem to want it, try again later.
- \* Don't forget that milk is still the most important part of her diet and at first she will continue to drink the same amount of breast milk or infant formula.

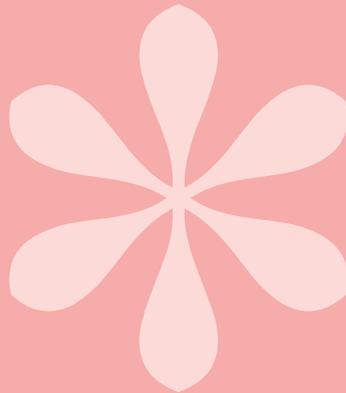


- \* Do not add sugar or salt to foods for your baby (salt can overload a young baby's kidneys and sugar can harm your baby's teeth). If your baby is sharing family foods, the whole family will benefit from eating less salt and sugar too. See page 19 for more about family meals.
- \* Do not put any foods in your baby's bottle as this can reduce the nourishment she gets from her milk.

Never leave your baby alone while eating in case she chokes.



When starting solids, get your baby comfortable sitting up and facing straight forward – a highchair will ensure she is well-supported and therefore less likely to choke. She will also be able to use her fingers to pick up her food more easily.





# Moving on

Once your baby is used to eating a few foods, it's time to move on to:

- \* More meals – moving from food at one meal a day to food at two and three meals a day.
- \* More foods – giving her food from each of the food groups (see page 6). You can use many of the foods you have cooked for the rest of the family, as long as they have not had salt or sugar added.
- \* More texture – from mashed to lumps and from lumps to minced foods, together with finger foods. Mixing a new food with a familiar one, such as adding cooked lentils to mashed carrot or parsnips, may make this easier.
- \* More nutrients – as your baby's need for iron and other important nutrients increases. There is further information on page 17.
- \* More food experiences – drinking from a cup and feeding herself with a wider range of finger foods.

This process should be done at your baby's own pace. Some babies may only want a few spoonfuls.



## More meals

When your baby seems ready, progress from offering solid food once a day to two and three times a day. She should still have her usual amount of milk throughout the day. Solid foods should be offered to your baby after her usual milk feeds. In addition, you may wish to offer her tap water in a cup with meals.

Remember that all babies are different. Your baby will let you know how much she wants to eat and this may vary from day to day. For some, this is what a typical day's meals may look like:

Breakfast	Low-sugar cereal (e.g. wheat biscuits, plain cooled instant hot oat cereal) with your baby's usual milk or full-fat cow's milk (if she is six months and over) Fruit – soft fruit pieces
Lunch	Minced or mashed food and finger foods, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• scrambled eggs or baked beans with toast slices. If you are giving your baby eggs, always make sure they are fully cooked.</li><li>• <b>or</b> homemade carrot soup with bread fingers</li><li>• <b>or</b> pasta with tomato and vegetable sauce</li><li>• <b>and/or</b> chopped/mashed banana and full-fat plain yogurt</li></ul>
Dinner	Minced or mashed food and finger foods, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• tuna and pasta (in oil or water) with sweetcorn</li><li>• <b>or</b> mashed potato with cheese and broccoli</li><li>• <b>or</b> minced meat/lentils with mashed potatoes and carrots</li><li>• <b>and/or</b> mashed canned apricots in juice with full-fat plain yogurt</li></ul>



As the amount of food your baby eats increases, she will need less of her usual milk. However, you should still continue to breastfeed for as long as you wish or she should drink about 500–600 mls of infant formula a day until she is 12 months old.

## More texture

Don't be frightened of giving your baby food with lumps. It is important for her to learn that food comes in different textures and these foods will help encourage her to chew. Some babies dislike lumps but are happy to eat finger foods such as cooked carrot sticks, or small pieces of crust or toast.

Vitamins: ask your health visitor about vitamins for you and your baby. It is recommended that breastfed babies from age six months and formula-fed babies from the age of 1 year (or when they are drinking less than 500 ml of formula milk a day) should have vitamin drops (A, C and D) up to the age of 5. If you qualify for Healthy Start you should receive these vitamin drops free of charge. Mothers who are breastfeeding should also take a daily vitamin D supplement.

More information about Healthy Start Vitamins can be found at: [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)



## Iron

Iron is essential for your baby's development. Breast milk contains iron but after around six months there is not enough for your baby's needs. Give iron-rich foods regularly such as:

- \* Red meat, canned fish, or well-cooked eggs. Use minced meat for dishes such as shepherd's pie (see recipe section). Liver contains lots of iron but it shouldn't be eaten more than once a week.
- \* Low-sugar breakfast cereals with added iron. Wholemeal bread, lentils, beans and green vegetables contain some iron too.



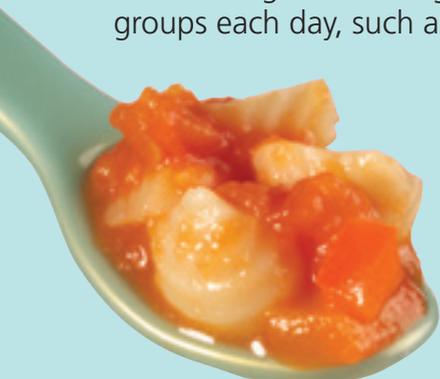
Avoid foods and drinks that fill your baby up with sugar or fat, or are high in salt and/or have few vitamins and minerals, e.g. sweetened drinks and fizzy drinks, fruit squashes, fruit drinks, chocolate, sweets, crisps and corn snacks, deep fried foods, chocolate coated biscuits, pastries, tea and coffee.





# Mini meals

As your baby approaches her first birthday you can expect her to be eating a wide range of different foods from all the food groups each day, such as:



Simple tomato and vegetable sauce

- \* 3–4 servings of fruit and vegetables
- \* 3–4 servings of starchy food each day, e.g. potatoes, bread, rice
- \* 2 servings of protein, e.g. meat, fish, eggs, pulses
- \* 2–3 servings of dairy products, e.g. milky pudding, yogurt, cheese.

As your baby gets older she may enjoy a healthy snack between meals, such as:



- \* small sandwiches filled with cold meat or fish (be careful to remove all bones from fish)
- \* cooled, filled cooked pasta such as tortellini
- \* cucumber sticks or fruit slices
- \* small breadsticks with a cheesy dip (mix 1 tablespoon of finely grated cheese with 1–2 tablespoons of full-fat plain yogurt).

## Joining in with the family

Eating with your baby makes her feel more included and helps her develop social skills and encourages her to get into good habits from a young age. She may be slower and make a mess but try to be patient.

- \* Try to organise mealtimes for the same time every day – she will then know what to expect and is more likely to eat happily.
- \* Cook something all the family can eat.
- \* Don't add any salt or sugar while cooking – you will all benefit from having less salt and sugar.
- \* Avoid using ready-made meals and food products which have high salt and sugar content.
- \* Encourage her to feed herself.
- \* Smile and talk to your baby.



If you do want to offer foods high in sugar these should be kept to a minimum and should be offered as part of a main meal not as a snack between meals. Try not to use a sweet food as a reward for eating a savoury one.

## Using ready-made baby foods

It can sometimes be convenient to use jars or packets of baby food but don't let them replace home-made foods altogether. Home-made foods can offer your baby more variety in texture and will encourage her to accept lumps and more solid foods. You could also cook bigger quantities than you need and freeze some in small tubs.

If you buy baby foods:

- \* Choose foods where the label says they do not contain added sugars. Also look out for any of the following words on the label, all of which are forms of sugar: honey, sucrose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, fructose, hydrolysed starch, corn or maize syrup, molasses, raw/brown sugar, treacle, and concentrated fruit juice.
- \* Make sure the foods are within their use-by date and that the seal has not been broken.
- \* Only heat up the amount you need and throw away any food your baby doesn't eat.
- \* Manufactured baby foods do not contain any added salt. Don't add any salt to home-made foods.
- \* Bought baby foods tend to be much more expensive than making your own food.
- \* Some baby foods may say 'suitable from four months' on the label but health experts agree that around six months is the safest age to start to introduce solids.

## Are there any foods I shouldn't give?

- \* Honey, salt and sugar should be avoided until 12 months of age.
- \* Whole nuts, including peanuts should be avoided until 5 years of age as there is a risk of choking (finely chopped peanuts are okay – see page 29 for further advice on peanuts).
- \* Shark, marlin and swordfish should be avoided until 16 years of age. This is due to the levels of mercury in these fish, which affects a baby's growing nervous system. Other fish and shellfish are suitable after six months of age, but raw shellfish shouldn't be given to babies because it increases their risk of getting food poisoning.
- \* It is not a good idea to give low-fat, low-calorie or high-fibre foods to babies because they need foods that provide lots of calories and nutrients in a small amount of food, rather than bulky high-fibre foods.

**How can I get my baby to try new foods?** Try, try and try again is the best way of getting babies and children to eat foods with a new flavour. The more they try new foods and the more they see the rest of the family eating it, the more likely they are to eat it!





# What can my baby drink?



## Milk

- \* Breastfeeding will benefit you and your baby for as long as you choose to continue. Breast milk changes as your baby grows to adapt to her needs.
- \* Follow-on formula which is marketed for babies over six months is not recommended or needed. First milk (whey-based formula) is the best type of formula for your baby until she is 12 months old.
- \* Cow's milk (full-fat and pasteurised milk only) is suitable as a main drink after 12 months. After six months you can also use full-fat cow's milk for mixing in cereal or for cooking, e.g. in sauces and puddings, and you can also give products made from full-fat cow's milk, e.g. yogurt and fromage frais. Semi-skimmed milk is not suitable for babies and young children under the age of 2.

Fresh fruit juices are a good source of vitamin C but contain natural sugars that can cause tooth decay. They are also acidic and acidic drinks may erode your baby's teeth. Fruit juices should therefore be given in small amounts (no more than half a cup), be unsweetened and diluted (one part juice to one part water). They should be given at meal times only in a free-flow cup, not a feeding bottle.

Water is the best drink to give in addition to milk and this is the only drink which is safe for teeth if given between meals. Use tap water as mineral, sweetened, flavoured or carbonated water can be too high in salt and minerals for babies. For babies under six months of age, tap water should be boiled and cooled first.

## Cups

From six months you should continue to breastfeed as normal, offering tap water in a cup with meals if you feel your baby needs it. If you are formula feeding, you can start to offer your baby tap water or her usual formula in a cup from six months. You may need to help your baby to hold the cup until she can do it herself.

Learning to drink from a cup can be messy but she needs to learn to sip, not suck. If the cup has a lid, make sure the water can drip out if turned upside down; this is known as a free-flow cup. Free-flow cups are given out as part of the Childsmile Programme. Non-spill (valve) cups encourage your baby to suck rather than sip and should be avoided. The sucking motion can indirectly lead to speech problems.

Drinks taken from a bottle are more likely to lead to dental problems because the fluid stays in the mouth longer than when sipping from a cup. Apart from when she is breastfeeding, aim to have your baby drinking **only** from a cup (and no longer using bottles) by her first birthday. Avoid giving her sweetened or acidic drinks (see page 24 – Drinks to avoid) which will harm her teeth.



## Drinks to avoid

- \* Soya-based infant formula should only be used on the advice of your GP or health visitor. This is because of possible long-term side effects of soya-based formula and its sugar content. The sugars in soya milk can cause tooth decay, making it important for babies to drink from a fast-flow teat or a cup. Damage can be kept to a minimum if soya drinks are given at meal times only. Soya formula is not suitable as a bedtime drink. Other soya-based drinks should be avoided until your baby is 12 months old.
- \* Goat's and sheep's milk are not suitable for babies under 12 months, and they should be pasteurised for babies over 12 months.
- \* Sugary, diet or no added sugar fruit squashes, energy drinks and fizzy drinks are not suitable for babies or toddlers. They have few nutrients and can fill your baby up, meaning that she doesn't eat well. They are also damaging to teeth.
- \* Flavoured milks and yogurt drinks contain added sugar and are not suitable for young children.
- \* Baby fruit and herbal drinks are not suitable as they are usually sweetened.
- \* Tea and coffee contain substances which prevent your baby absorbing some nutrients from food, act as stimulants, and have no nutritional value themselves. Don't give your baby tea or coffee even if diluted.



**Remember:** If your baby is well-established on solids and wants a drink during the night, only give her plain tap water or breast milk.

**Caring for her teeth:** It is important that you clean your baby's teeth from as soon as the first tooth appears. Use a soft toothbrush with a small head and a smear of at least 1,000 parts per million (ppm) fluoride toothpaste for children under 2, and a small pea-sized amount for children aged 2 years and above.





# Foods to avoid if weaning before six months

Weaning before six months is not recommended. However, if you do start to give solids before six months, the following foods should be avoided (this includes the ingredients of ready-made baby foods):

- \* foods that contain gluten like wheat, rye, barley and oats. These can be found in pasta, rusks, bread, flour and breakfast cereals containing gluten
  - \* fish and shellfish (such as prawns)
  - \* dairy products (like cheese, plain fromage frais, custard, milk sauces, plain yogurt and any milk other than breast milk or infant formula)
  - \* eggs
  - \* liver and liver products (such as pate)
  - \* peanuts or foods containing peanuts such as peanut butter
  - \* nuts and seeds
  - \* soya products (tofu, soya yogurt and so on)
  - \* citrus fruits (like oranges or grapefruit) and juices
  - \* soft berries (such as raspberries and strawberries)
  - \* honey (remember honey should not be given to your baby until they are 12 months old).
- 

If you decide to wean your baby before six months, you will need to puree foods to a smooth, thin consistency. Suitable foods are plain baby rice mixed with her usual milk and served in a bowl (never in a bottle), pureed fruit such as apple, pear or banana, or pureed vegetables such as potato, carrot or parsnip. All equipment for spoon feeding must be sterilised until she is six months old. The amount you give should be guided by your baby's appetite. It is important to move from pureed on to mashed and more lumpy foods as your baby gets used to taking foods from a spoon.

Babies should never be weaned before four months (17 weeks).



## Allergies

Babies are more likely to develop allergies if there is a family history of eczema, asthma or hay fever. For these families, exclusive breastfeeding is particularly recommended for the first six months. It is a good idea to introduce the foods that are most likely to cause food allergies one at a time, starting with just a small amount, and not before your baby is six months old so you can spot any reaction. These foods are:

- \* peanuts
- \* nuts
- \* seeds
- \* eggs
- \* soya
- \* wheat (and other cereals that contain gluten such as rye, barley and oats)
- \* fish and shellfish
- \* any milk other than breast milk or infant formula.



Goat's milk infant formula is now permitted for sale in the UK. However, goat's milk formula is not suitable for babies with a cow's milk protein allergy and should therefore not be given to them, unless directed by a health professional.

If you are introducing nuts, peanuts or seeds from six months, they should be finely chopped to avoid choking. There is further information on preventing choking on the back page.

## Peanut allergy

Previous advice for children with a family history of allergy was to avoid peanuts until 3 years of age. This advice has now changed because the latest research has shown that there is no clear evidence to suggest that this will help to reduce the risk of your child developing a peanut allergy.

For children where there is a history of allergy in their immediate family (if the child's parents, brothers or sisters have an allergy such as asthma, eczema, hay fever or other types of allergy), the current advice is that you should speak to your GP or health visitor before introducing peanuts into your baby's diet.

If your child already has a known allergy, such as a diagnosed food allergy or diagnosed eczema, then she has a higher risk of developing a peanut allergy. In this case, you should speak to your GP or health visitor for advice first.

For children with no known allergies, and no family history of allergy in their immediate family, finely chopped peanuts can be introduced as part of a healthy, balanced diet from six months in the same way as other foods which commonly cause allergies (that is, one at a time, checking for any reaction).

**Need help?** If you think your baby may have reacted to a food, contact your health visitor or GP. Write down what happened and avoid giving that food again unless advised to do so.



# Recipes

**Remember:** Do not add any sugar or salt to your baby's food. Cooking from scratch is often cheaper and healthier and quite easy to do. If you are not sure ask your Health Visitor about cooking classes in your area.

All recipes are suitable for freezing unless otherwise stated. Freeze in small tubs as soon as the food has cooled.

Use seasonal fruits and vegetables where possible as they tend to be cheaper and tastier.



## **Lentil and potato mash (makes 4–5 portions)**

50 g (4 dessertspoons) red lentils

1 medium potato, peeled and diced into small pieces

Method:

- Place lentils in a pan. Add 300 mls water and bring to boil. Cover with a pot lid and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Add potatoes to same pan and cook for a further 15 minutes. Cook until mixture is soft, adding more water if mixture begins to stick to the pot.
- Drain the mix using a sieve but reserve the liquid to add later.
- Mash the mix with a couple of dessertspoons of the cooking liquid. Adjust consistency with more of the cooking liquid if required.

Measuring guide for liquids:

- 1 tablespoon is 15 ml
- 1 dessertspoon is 10 ml
- 1 teaspoon is 5 ml



## Stewed apple with apricots (makes 2–3 portions)

1 eating apple, peeled and finely chopped  
5 canned apricots (natural juice, not syrup),  
chopped into pieces  
2 tablespoons water

Method:

- Place apple and apricots in a saucepan with the water and gently simmer until the fruit is tender. Add a little more water if necessary during cooking to prevent drying out.
- Mash well.





## Simple tomato and vegetable sauce (makes 8 portions of sauce)

Make this simple sauce to accompany pasta.

- 1 dessertspoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ a red pepper, washed, deseeded and finely chopped
- ½ a courgette, washed and finely chopped
- 400 g can chopped tomatoes in juice

Method:

- Heat oil and gently soften onion for 5 minutes on low heat, stirring continually.
- Add pepper and courgette and cook on a low heat for a further 5 minutes. Keep stirring.
- Add tomatoes, cover with a pot lid and cook for 15 minutes or until vegetables are soft, stirring occasionally.

To serve with pasta and cheese:

- 15–20 g (2 dessertspoons) small pasta shapes
- 1 tablespoon grated full-fat cheddar cheese

Method:

- Cook pasta according to the packet instructions.
- Drain and serve with two dessertspoons of the tomato and vegetable sauce and top with cheese.

**Variation:** Add 200 g (8 oz) minced beef when you are softening the onion and follow the rest of the recipe to make a bolognese sauce. This will increase the number of portions the recipe makes.



## Creamy lentil and vegetable curry (makes 7 portions of curry)

1 dessertspoon vegetable oil  
1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped  
1 small carrot, scrubbed, grated or finely chopped  
100 g (8 dessertspoons) split red lentils  
½ teaspoon mild curry powder (not paste)  
200 mls water  
1 small carton full-fat natural yogurt

### Method:

- Heat oil and gently soften onion for five minutes.
- Stir in carrot, lentils and curry powder.
- Add water, stir and bring to boil. Cover with a pot lid, reduce heat and simmer for 15–20 minutes. Stir continually (as this sticks to the pot very easily) and add a little more water if necessary. The mixture should be quite thick but not dry.
- When the lentils are soft, remove from heat and stir in natural yogurt.
- Mash as required and serve with boiled white rice.

**Variation:** A small chicken breast with the skin removed and finely diced may be added to the oil at the beginning along with the onion.



Creamy lentil and  
vegetable curry



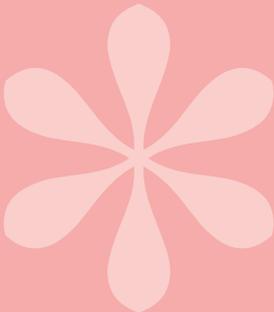


## Cottage pie with mash (makes 6 portions)

100 g minced beef  
½ small onion, finely chopped  
1 small carrot, scrubbed and grated  
1 tablespoon of frozen peas  
4 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered  
1–2 tablespoons full-fat milk

### Method:

- Place mince and chopped onion in a small pan and cook gently until the mince has browned. Add 2–3 tablespoons of water and the grated carrot. Cover and allow to cook gently for 15–20 minutes. Add peas five minutes before the end of cooking time.
- Stir occasionally, adding more water as required.
- Cover potatoes with water in a pan and put a lid on the pan. Cook until soft. Add more water if needed. Then drain and mash together with 1–2 tablespoons of milk.
- When mince is cooked, serve with the mashed potato.





## Mashed potato with vegetables (makes 4 portions)

2 medium potatoes (or 1 medium potato and 1 medium parsnip), peeled and diced

5 small florets broccoli

1 spring onion, washed and trimmed

Full-fat milk to mix (optional)

### Method:

- Cook potatoes (and parsnip if used) in a pan of boiling water. Add broccoli to the pan for the last 5 minutes of cooking.
- Drain vegetables and set aside broccoli.
- Mash potato (along with parsnip, if using). Add milk/water to make a smooth mash. Slice spring onion very finely and add to potato.
- Serve with florets of broccoli on the side.



Cottage pie  
with mash





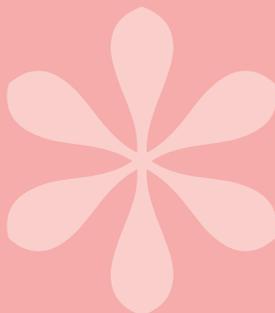
## Home-made carrot soup (makes 6 portions)

Make this for all the family

1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
5 large carrots, scrubbed and chopped or grated  
500 ml of water  
½ teaspoon grated nutmeg  
1 large potato, peeled and chopped into small pieces  
Approx 150 ml full-fat milk

Method:

- Heat oil in a large saucepan and cook the onion for 5 minutes over a low heat.
- Add carrots, stir and cover. Cook gently for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Add water and nutmeg, and bring to the boil. Add the chopped potato. Cover and simmer for 15–20 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.
- Blend. Return to the pan and add enough milk to make a smooth soup. Stir and heat through.
- Serve with pitta slice or toast fingers with butter or margarine.





## **Salmon and potato pie (makes 3 portions)**

100 g skinless salmon fillet  
2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced  
6 dessertspoons full-fat milk

### Method:

- Place salmon in a pan and cover with milk. Poach by gently simmering until the fish flakes easily with a fork.
- Remove the salmon but reserve the milk to add to the potatoes later.
- Cook potatoes in a pan of boiling water for 10 minutes or until soft. Drain and mash with the milk from the salmon. Add a little more milk if necessary to adjust consistency.
- Flake fish and add to potato – or serve separately.



## **Fish pancakes (makes 9 small fishcakes)**

Salmon and potato pie mixture (ingredients as above)  
1 egg, beaten

### Method:

- Add the beaten egg to the salmon and potato pie mixture.
- Pre-heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and drop small spoonfuls of the fish mix into the pan.
- When the mixture is set and golden on the underside, turn over to cook on the remaining side. Press gently on the golden upper side with a fish slice/palette knife to flatten each fish cake.
- When both sides are golden, remove from pan to cool.

Serve warm or cold. These make very good finger foods.

## How to prevent your baby from choking:

- Always stay with your baby when she is eating.
- Cook hard or stringy vegetables such as green beans and carrots until they are quite soft for use as finger foods, rather than offering them raw.
- Encourage your baby to chew but avoid giving small items such as peas, whole grapes, or whole cherry tomatoes.
- Stop your baby from putting too much food in her mouth in case she chokes.
- Make sure her mouth is empty before the next mouthful of food. It is important to go at your baby's pace.
- Let your baby feed herself so she is in control and the food does not go too far back in her mouth.



Ask your health visitor for advice on how to deal with choking. If your child has special needs and you need expert advice, ask to speak to a speech and language therapist.

**For more recipe ideas, visit your library for cookery books on weaning.**

If you have access to the internet look at some of these websites:

[www.readysteadybaby.org.uk/growing-together/looking-after-your-growing-baby/weaning-your-baby/index.aspx](http://www.readysteadybaby.org.uk/growing-together/looking-after-your-growing-baby/weaning-your-baby/index.aspx)

[www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

**For more information on how to look after your baby's teeth:**

[www.child-smile.org](http://www.child-smile.org)

It is very important to get specialist information if you are intending to bring up your child as a vegetarian so take a look here, under the heading 'Health and Nutrition'.

[www.vegsoc.org/factsheets](http://www.vegsoc.org/factsheets)

**[www.readysteadybaby.org.uk](http://www.readysteadybaby.org.uk)**