

## WEANING



### When do I start weaning?

Most children are not ready to introduce 'non-milk' foods into their diet until they are 6 months old. However if your baby was born prematurely they may be ready at different stages, please consult your Dr or Health Visitor for advice.

The Department of Health recommends that a child is not weaned before six months old, however if your child is still hungry after a few days of increased milk feeding you can wean earlier, but not before 17 weeks.

At six months old your child may become interested in what you and your family are eating, they may have teeth and want to chew, or still be hungry after milk, even with increased amounts over a few days.

### My baby is ready to start weaning what next?

First of all be patient and be prepared for mess at meal times, it takes your baby time to learn how to eat from a spoon, until now all they have been used to is a continuous flow of fluid, this may also cause them to cry between mouthfuls, don't worry this is perfectly normal as they are hungry for food.

Make sure everything you use to feed your baby is really clean.

Put a newspaper or a messy mat down around the area where you are feeding them.

Don't force your baby to eat, he/she will still be getting all the nutrients they need from breast milk or formula milk, the main aim at this stage is for your baby to get used to taking food from a spoon.

Choose a time of day when you are both most relaxed; allow plenty of time for feeding. Initially feed your baby their milk and secondly introduce the spoon with solids.

MAKE SURE YOU TEST THE TEMPERATURE OF THE FOOD BEFORE FEEDING YOUR BABY TO AVOID BURNING THEIR MOUTH AND OSEPHEGOUS.

Once your baby has become used to the spoon, introduce solids at the beginning of the feed and then give them their milk. Gradually increase the amount of solid food given, follow their appetite.

Increase the solid food from one meal a day to two, and then three. As he/she eats more solid foods their milk requirement will decrease.

When your child is showing interest in the spoon and feeding themselves encourage them. Give them the spoon to hold, and you have a second to assist with the feeding, give them finger foods to eat. Be prepared for mess and allow them to explore.

How much food shall I give my baby?

Initially small amounts, such as an ice cube size. You can always heat more food if they are still hungry and this avoids waste.

Your baby will tell you when they have had too much for example they will:

- Turn their head away
- Repeatedly spit the food out
- Push the bowl away
- Scream or cry
- Hold food in their mouth

What shall I feed my baby?

Initially try foods such as

- Mixed Baby Rice
- Mashed/pureed carrot or parsnip
- Mashed courgette
- Mashed or pureed ripe fruits such as mango, cooked apple or pear

Hint: Try your baby with savory foods first and give them the fruit as a dessert if they are still hungry. Do not add extra sugar or salt to any cooking. Broccoli releases gasses in the stomach so be aware of this if your baby suffers from colic.

Once you increase the amount of food you are giving and your baby is getting hungrier for solid foods you may like to try:

- Pureed Meat or poultry
- Mashed lentils, split pulses or hummous
- Whole milk products, yoghurt, fromage frais
- Cows milk can be used in cooking, ie cauliflower cheese, and custard.  
Do not give cows milk to your baby to drink until they are 1 year old.

#### Finger Foods

- Toast
- Cubes Cheese
- Rice Cakes
- Peeled fruit, Pear, Peaches, Melon, Banana
- Cooked Vegetables, Cauliflower, green beans, carrots
- Cooked Pasta

You should not delay giving your baby soft lumpy foods or finger foods as they may refuse to eat these later on. Chewing the lumps also develops the speech muscles.

Once your baby is used to eating solids you can introduce them to the family foods you eat, this will not only reduce extra cooking time but encourage social time. Remember not to add salt to your cooking if you do this, you can add it after you take their food out should you wish.

#### Foods to avoid if weaning before 6 months:

Food containing Gluten, ie Rye, Barley, Wheat and oats

Eggs

Fish and Shellfish

Liver

Nuts and Seeds

#### Avoid

Honey should not be given to any child under 1 as it can cause infant botulism.

Nuts should not be given to children under 5 because of choking and risk of developing nut allergy.

Do not add salt to cooking, baby's kidneys cannot cope with it.

Do not add sugar to cooking or encourage sugary foods as this can cause teeth to decay when they come through.

## Drinking

After the age of six months you can give your baby tap water (used boiled water if making up bottles), or diluted fruit juice, 1 part juice with 10 parts water, it is a good idea to give them a lidded cup to drink from. Remember you should not give cows milk to drink until they are at least 12 months old.

If you have any worries please do not hesitate to contact our Health Visiting Team.

## Links

<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/baby/weaning/>

<http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Babies,-weaning/Pages/Introduction.aspx?url=Pages/What-is-it.aspx>