

Top Tips and Activities

Weaning



What is it?

Weaning is the gradual introduction of a range of foods into your baby's diet until they are eating the same foods as the rest of your family. Up to six months, your baby needs only milk. Breast milk is preferable over infant formula milk due to the health benefits to both mother and child such as better immune system for baby and the reduction in certain cancers and the return to pre-pregnancy weight for mothers.

At approximately six months your baby requires more than milk alone due to their increased energy requirements, it is at this point when solid foods should be introduced and eaten in addition to breast or formula milk.

When to start?

Health experts agree that six months is the best age to start introducing solids. Before this, your baby's digestive system is still developing and weaning too soon may increase the risk of infections and allergies. Weaning is also easier at six months as your baby will be getting hungrier due to their increased energy requirements.

Where to start?

Start by offering a small amount of mashed vegetable, fruit or cereal mixed with milk after a milk feed or in the middle of one, if this works better. If feeding your child hot food, allow it to cool, stir it and test the temperature before giving it to your baby.

8 Top Tips

To get you started try the following tips...

1. Start by offering just a few teaspoons of food once a day
2. Use a little of your baby's usual milk (breast or formula) to mix with the food
3. Allow your baby to feed themselves using their fingers as soon as they show an interest.
4. Give your baby a range of foods and textures to taste
5. Don't force feed your baby, if your baby isn't interested wait and try again later.
6. If you are using a spoon wait until the baby has opened their mouth to accept it.
7. Let your baby get hands on with their food.
8. If you are bottle feeding don't add any foods to the milk.

First Foods!

When introducing food for the first time to a child, ensure the texture is quite soft to begin with and build up firmer more solid foods when your baby is used to feeding. Some ideas for first foods include...

- Cereals such as baby rice mixed with milk.
- Mashed cooked vegetables such as parsnips, potato, sweet potato and carrot.
- Pieces of soft fruit such as bananas

...and REMEMBER never add salt or sugar to your babies food!

Starting Good Eating Habits!

In the first 12 months of a babies life they are usually more willing to try new foods, use this to your advantage and introduce a wide variety of foods with different tastes and textures. To make life easier for yourself keep introducing family foods to your baby as often as possible (remember not to season with salt though). It is important that your child begins eating a range of different foods so don't just introduce fruit and vegetables, offer meat, fish and alternatives and starchy foods too.

It is important to remember never to leave your child alone when eating as they could choke on the food. When trying any new thing in life it is important to receive encouragement so don't leave your child and offer praise and be enthusiastic. Good Luck!