Baby Nosh!

A five-minute guide to introducing your baby to food
The meaning of Weaning

There comes a time when a baby needs more nourishment than breast or infant milk alone can provide.

New government guidelines encourage mothers to breast-feed their baby exclusively (i.e. offer only breast milk) for the first six months of life.

Weaning is the process of introducing a baby to foods other than milk.

There is more to learning to eat than meets the eye – so it is best to wean a baby gradually.

What and when you introduce different foods is important and this booklet guides you through the stages of weaning.
When is it best to start?

Each baby will be ready for solids at a different time. Many babies will not need solids before six months, however, some will need to start a little earlier - although not before four months. It is important not to rush your baby into taking solids and to let them guide you. Speak to your health visitor if you have concerns about this.

For premature babies, consult your health visitor about when it is best to wean.

Not too soon

Don’t be tempted to start weaning your baby too soon because their body will not be ready to cope with food other than breast or infant milk.

As a guide, if a baby’s head and back support still seems to be weak and they are unable to remain seated when partially supported, they are not ready to be weaned.

Not too late

Delaying weaning beyond six months may mean that your baby misses out on important nutrients such as vitamins and iron.

Mums who breastfeed need to make sure they have a very nourishing diet - see Bump 2 Baby for more information.
How to start weaning!

Start slowly – once a day, before, during or after a milk feed, offer one small (plastic) teaspoon of:

- gluten-free cereal mixed with breast or infant milk e.g. maize, baby rice or puréed cooked rice
- cooked vegetable purée e.g. potato, yam or parsnip
- fruit purée e.g. banana, mango or cooked apple.

NOTE: Babies weaned at six months may take considerably more than one teaspoon right from the beginning.

The food should be the same thickness as single cream.

Make sure your baby is in a sitting position when eating.
What next?

1. Gradually make the food a thicker consistency. Make vegetable purées more substantial – combine potato, yam or parsnip with other vegetables.

2. Slowly increase the amount of solid food offered – try to match the portion size to your baby’s appetite.

3. Gradually increase the number of solid food feeds from one, to two and then to three a day.

4. Baby yogurt and fromage frais can be introduced.

5. Go for variety – try to offer different foods throughout the day.

By the time your baby is around six months old, purées that combine both cooked meat or pulses (peas, beans or lentils e.g. dahl) and vegetables should be offered.

Continue to give your baby breast milk or infant milk. Always offer food on a spoon – never add it to a bottle.
Perfect purées

Soft food purée

Prepare soft food (e.g. banana, mango, melon and avocado) by mashing it with a fork. If there are any lumps, push the food through a sieve with a spoon. Alternatively, use a hand-held blender.

Don’t add sugar or salt to baby food.

To make a purée thinner, add breast or infant milk.

Cooked vegetable purée

Vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, parsnips and broccoli need to be cooked before being puréed.

Peel off any skin, and then rinse and chop the vegetables into small pieces. Steam or boil in a pan until soft (about 10 to 15 minutes). Mash with a fork or potato masher. If there are any lumps, push the food through a sieve.
Cooked fruit purée

Hard fruits such as apples need cooking before being pureéd.

Peel, core, rinse and chop the fruit into small pieces. Place in a saucepan with two tablespoons of water and cover with a lid. Cook over a low heat until the fruit is soft (about 5 to 10 minutes). Mash or push the cooked fruit through a sieve.