Weaning
The information in this leaflet will help you wean your baby onto solid foods.

Your baby’s development from breast or formula milk feeding to sharing in the family meal is one of the first stages of growing up.

Enjoy it. Encourage it. Don’t force it.

Let it happen at its own pace, and if you have any worries talk to your health visitor or GP.
What is weaning?

Weaning means introducing a range of ‘non-milk’ foods gradually until your baby is eating the same foods as the rest of your family.

Until six months, your baby has needed only breastmilk or infant formula milk. From about six months your baby has developed so that he or she is able to eat solid foods. Your baby now needs more than milk alone can provide.

By six months, your baby will be developing the skills to sit up, hold objects and put them to his or her mouth, and will show signs of being interested in the food you and your family are eating.
When to start

At about six months babies can easily be moved onto a mixed diet.

Try giving solid foods when your baby:

- Can sit up
- Shows interest in solid food
- Picks up food and puts it in his or her mouth
- Wants to chew and may have teeth
- Appears to still be hungry even though you have tried increasing milk feeds for a few days.

HANDY HINT
Allow plenty of time for feeding, particularly at first. Choose a time of day when you and your baby are relaxed.
Solid foods should not be introduced before the end of your baby's fourth month (at 20 weeks). If you decide to introduce your baby to solid foods before six months there are many foods that should be avoided. These include foods which contain wheat, gluten, eggs, fish, shellfish, liver, citrus fruits, soft and unpasteurised cheeses.

You need to ask your health visitor for advice, especially if your baby was premature.

HANDY HINT
Never leave your baby alone when eating. Talk to your baby quietly and encourage them to eat.
How to start

Start by offering a small amount of mashed vegetable or fruit after a milk feed or in the middle of one, if this works better. If the food is hot, make sure you stir it and test it before giving it to your baby.

Most babies take time to learn how to take food from a spoon and some manage better with their fingers, so be patient and be prepared for some mess. Your baby will be finding out about different tastes and textures and learning that food doesn’t come in a continuous flow.

HANDBY HINT
Make sure your baby is sitting up straight and is facing forward. A highchair is best. This way your baby is able to explore foods better and will be less likely to choke.
CUPS
If you are bottle feeding, comfort sucking on a bottle can become a habit that’s hard to break. Introduce a cup at six months and aim to have your baby off the bottle by their first birthday. Using a cup is better for your baby’s teeth.

- Don’t press food on your baby. If the food doesn’t seem to be wanted, wait and try again later.
- Don’t add any foods (including rusks) to a bottle containing milk.
- Wait for your baby to open his or her mouth when food is offered.
- Let your baby touch the food in the dish or on the spoon.
- Allow your baby to feed themselves, using their fingers, as soon as they show an interest.
- Give your baby a range of foods and textures to taste.

HANDY HINT
Water is the best alternative drink to milk, if you choose to give juice dilute it one part juice to ten parts water.