Guide to Easy Weaning
What is weaning?

Your baby will in time need to start eating solid foods and will gradually demand less milk. Weaning is the name given to the introduction of solid foods.

When to start weaning

While your baby is less than 4 months old only feed milk. Do not attempt to give solid food. If your baby is not satisfied by usual amounts of milk give larger or more frequent feeds.

Try to start weaning when your baby is 4 months old. It may be slow at first but keep trying. If they are not eating some solid food by the age of 6 months contact your health visitor.

Follow the steps to easy weaning at the centre of this leaflet.

What foods to use

There are two main options to choose from:

1. Home made food
2. Commercially prepared foods (packets, jars, tins)

Most people find ready made foods convenient but they are expensive and if used all the time your baby may be reluctant to eat family foods. Whether you make your own food or buy it ready-made do not add salt or sugar. Your baby’s system can not cope with more salt than is naturally found in foods. Added sugar can encourage a sweet tooth and lead to tooth decay.
Home made foods

Why do it yourself?
- It is cheaper to make your baby's meals
- Your baby can eat the same foods as the family
- You know exactly what's in it!
- It may take time to make, but cooking larger batches and freezing meals saves time and effort later on
- It makes it easier to change to family foods as your baby develops

What will I need?
You may find these useful when making your own baby foods: hand blender, liquidiser, fork, masher, sieve, ice cube trays, freezer pots/bags.

What about freezing foods?
Freezing foods can help you plan tasty meals ahead of time.

- Wash all containers and ice cube trays. They also need to be sterilised whilst your baby is under 6 months of age
- Use ice cube trays to freeze small blocks of prepared foods
- Store the frozen cubes in a labelled bag or container
- 'Mix and match' different food cubes for a variety of meals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age over 6 months</th>
<th>Foods to try</th>
<th>Time of day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Thin smooth puree of baby rice, cooked fruit (e.g. pears, apples), cooked vegetables (e.g. potato, cauliflower, carrot). 'Thin' foods with baby's usual milk or boiled water. Try 1-2 teaspoons at a time and continue with full milk feeds. Introduce flavours gradually.</td>
<td>Choose a time when you are not rushed as feeding may take time at first! Try when your baby is not over hungry and try one food at a time. Ideally give the solids first, followed by the milk feed, but this may not be practical at first.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Thicker smooth versions of foods in Step 1. Increase variety, try pureed meat (e.g. mince, chicken), fish and lentils. Baby rice can be mixed with foods to thicken them. Try yoghurt, fromage frais and sauces made with cow's milk unless your family has a history of allergies such as eczema or asthma. Discuss this with your Health Visitor.</td>
<td>Slowly increase solids to 3 times a day. Increase amount with your baby's appetite. Continue to give solids first and then the milk.</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Chop and mash foods listed in Steps 1 and 2 to give a lumpy texture. Include well cooked egg, baked beans, cereals (e.g. crisped rice or wheat based cereal), bread.</td>
<td>Continue to give three meals daily. Choose a cereal for breakfast and savoury foods at lunch and tea. Introduce desserts if your baby is still hungry. Try drinks in a cup or feeding beaker.</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Add foods eaten with fingers such as toast, pitta, chapatti, bread sticks, cubed and grated cheese, piece of apple, banana or carrot. <strong>NB</strong> Stay with your baby in case of choking. Give your baby small portions of family meals cut into pieces. Breast feed on demand or reduce milk intake to 500 ml/1 pint of formula.</td>
<td>Allow your baby to join in with family mealtimes. Let them feed themselves even if it does make a mess!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisable not to give yet</td>
<td>When to move onto next stage</td>
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<td>Wait until after 6 months of age before giving cow's milk as a drink, eggs and wheat based food (to avoid gluten). Ready made foods should have a gluten free symbol.</td>
<td>When your baby is used to taking foods from a spoon (after 2-4 weeks) move to <strong>Step 2</strong>.</td>
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<td>Don't add sugar or salt to home-made or bought foods. Don't give foods containing peanuts or other nuts.</td>
<td>Move to <strong>Step 3</strong> when your baby tolerates thick puree well, and is over 6 months old.</td>
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<td>Remember not to add extra sugar or salt to foods.</td>
<td>Once lumps are eaten well your baby should be offered family meals in <strong>Step 4</strong>.</td>
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<td>Don't give cow's milk as a drink before the age of 1 year; it will not provide sufficient goodness.</td>
<td>Use full fat cow's milk as the milk-drink after 1 year of age.</td>
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<td>Continue to be careful with sugar and salt.</td>
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<td>Only give sweet foods like chocolates and cakes occasionally. Give these after a meal time.</td>
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What shall I give my baby to drink?

Milk and cooled boiled water are all that your baby needs. If your baby refuses to drink plain water you can 'flavour' it with unsweetened fruit juice but give at mealtimes. The taste of sugary drinks may make them appealing but sugar will damage your baby's developing teeth.

If you give sugar free drinks, dilute them more than you would for yourself. This way your baby will not get too much artificial sweetener.

Can babies have low fat and high fibre foods?

Low fat foods and high fibre foods are not suitable for children under 2 years of age.

Children need to have plenty of calories and goodness from a wide variety of foods to make sure they grow properly. Full fat foods like milks, cheeses, yoghurt and butter/margarine are good sources of energy for your baby. But remember to limit foods and drinks containing sugar and salt.

Start introducing adult healthy eating from the age of two years by increasing fibre and reducing fat.

Should my baby have extra vitamins?

Breastfed babies should be given extra vitamins (A and D) from 6 months. Formula fed babies should have them from 1 year. All toddlers should continue to have extra vitamins until at least 2 years of age. Your Health Visitor can give you advice about this.
How do I know if my baby is constipated?

Constipation is the infrequent passing of very hard stools. If you think that your baby is constipated then tell your Health Visitor.

These remedies may help at first:
- If using formula milk check you are making it up correctly
- Give extra drinks of cooled boiled water
- Give pure fruit juice diluted with cooled boiled water
- Give more fruit and vegetables
- Give less rice based foods

These are not long term remedies. If it does not get better tell your Doctor.

What do I do if my baby refuses to eat?

Don't despair - it is a common problem! As new foods are tasted during weaning your baby will develop it's own likes and dislikes. If a food is refused then try it again after a day or two. Some babies stop eating all solid foods, but don't worry, it is unusual for this to last for too long. A few days without food will not harm your baby, but do encourage drinks. If you are concerned talk to your Health Visitor.

What about additives in foods and drinks?

It is almost impossible to avoid all additives, but it is sensible to limit them when you can. Try to choose products without artificial colours and preservatives. If you have allergies in your family and are concerned about weaning speak with your Health Visitor or Doctor, they may recommend that you see a Dietitian.