Tasty ideas from people who understand you and your baby

At about 4-6 months your baby will be ready to start on solids. But babies can be fussy eaters. So SMA Nutrition asked Annabel Karmel, the bestselling author of “The Complete Baby and Toddler Meal Planner”, to give you some tempting recipe ideas.

All the information contained within this booklet has been approved by our nutritionist. And because we understand that there are many demands on your time, we’ve made sure all the recipes can be quickly and easily prepared.

Babies tell you when they’re ready

It’s important that you don’t start weaning too soon as, before 4-6 months of age, your baby’s digestive system and immature kidneys can’t cope with anything but breast or formula milk. The signs that it’s time for weaning gradually become more obvious. Your baby lets you know by:

- Still being hungry after a milk feed
- Demanding feeds more frequently
- Waking at night for a feed having previously slept through
- Starting to chew hands/toys, and putting things in her mouth
- Showing an interest in your food
Milks suitable for babies

The table shows which milks are suitable for babies between birth and 2 years of age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Baby</th>
<th>Milk Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>Breast Milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>Infant Milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Follow-on Milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Whole Cow's Milk</td>
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It is very important to remember when starting your baby on solids that milk, especially breast milk, is still the most natural and the best food for growing babies. Babies should not need to drink anything other than milk or cooled, boiled water if they are thirsty. Any other drinks, like baby juices, should be confined to mealtimes because they can increase the risk of dental decay. These should be given from a beaker iron about 6 months of age, and never at night.

What about cow's milk?

Health professionals recommend that full fat cow's milk shouldn't be given as a baby's main drink before 1 year. This is because it is very low in iron. In fact, your baby would have to consume approximately 20 pints of cow's milk a day to ensure all her iron requirement is met.

Cow's milk, if given before 12 months, can cause bleeding of the digestive system in some sensitive babies. Semi-skimmed milk should not be introduced before 2 years and then only if your child is eating well, as it is low in energy which your child needs for growth. Skimmed milk should not be introduced before 5 years because it is very low in energy. When choosing dairy products avoid low fat varieties. High fibre/low fat diets recommended for older children and adults are not suitable for babies and toddlers.

The importance of iron in a baby's diet

Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional problem in the Western world. On average, babies are born with only sufficient iron reserves for the first six months of their life. Iron is vitally important to your baby's well-being and is an important factor in brain development particularly between 6 months and 2 years of age. Iron deficiency early on in life may have a profound influence on learning development.

Iron enriched follow-on milks

Whilst you can continue to breastfeed or use your infant milk, at 6 months you may wish to introduce an iron enriched follow-on milk such as SMA PROGRESS®.

Follow-on milks are specially formulated to meet the increased nutritional requirements of babies 6 months onwards. One pint of PROGRESS® per day will provide your child with all her daily iron requirements, plus a healthy balance of all the other important nutrients, including calcium and vitamins A and C.

As well as being given to your child as a drink, PROGRESS can be added to cereals or mixed in food (see recipes later). And to make life easier for mums and dads PROGRESS is available in a choice of different formats — powder in cans and single feed sachets, and ready-to-use liquid in cartons.
What are the best first foods?

The first solids fed to a baby should be easy to digest, have a bland taste, and be unlikely to provoke an allergic reaction. For this reason baby rice is ideal. (You might like to choose one that has no added sugar.) Make it up with formula, breast milk or cooled, boiled water according to the instructions on the packet.

Then, you can gradually introduce your baby to different tastes by adding vegetable and fruit purées. Try carrot, swede, potato, butternut squash, pumpkin, sweet potato or parsnip, and apple, pear, banana and avocado first. For variety mix two or three different things together (refer to the Weaning Chart for more ideas).

It’s also important to remember that:

- Vegetables should always be peeled and washed.
- Any outer leaves should also be removed.
- Fruit should always be peeled for children under 3.
- After this age wash fruit thoroughly.
- Salt should not be added to food for children under 3.

These fruits don't require any cooking provided they are ripe and can simply be puréed together with a little breast or formula milk.

How to prepare your baby’s first purées

It’s vital that after months of having only baby milk, the food you first offer your baby is smooth and soft in texture and never lumpy. The following pieces of equipment will make the job easier.

- A sieve is useful in the early stages for pressing small amounts of soft cooked fruits and vegetables through to achieve a very smooth purée (any milk should be mixed in afterwards).

- A baby food blender or hand mill is a quicker way of producing very smooth purées, and automatically removes any indigestible bits of fruit and vegetables such as skin and seeds (any milk should be added whilst the food blender is running).
- A hand held electric blender is a more labour saving way of preparing purées and worth the investment.
- A food processor or blender is handy for puréeing large quantities, especially useful when freezing.

Tips

- Make sure that all the utensils you use are thoroughly washed.
- Sterilise spoons (or anything that goes into your baby’s mouth) until 6 months. After this time they should be washed thoroughly.
- Wash your hands before preparing food for your baby.
- Your baby’s food should be given at room temperature or lukewarm, never very cold or piping hot.
- If reheating your baby’s food in a microwave, stir thoroughly to get rid of any hot spots and check the temperature before giving it to your baby.

Freezing

In a few hours you can make a whole month’s food supply for your baby. Freeze foods as soon as they have cooled down; in ice cube trays or small plastic containers for added convenience. Once the food is frozen, you can push it out from the container and put it into freezer bags labelled with the date you made the food. Use up the foods as soon as possible as your baby is developing rapidly and the texture of her food will need to change as she matures. Thaw food by taking it out of the freezer about one hour before your baby’s mealtime. Then reheat it thoroughly, allow it to cool and test the temperature of the food before giving it to your baby.
**SMA Weaning Chart**

Every baby develops at his own pace, so use this chart as a guideline. There are no hard and fast rules as to when to introduce new foods, but introduce them one at a time. Don’t rush your baby; milk will provide most of the proteins, vitamins and minerals she needs for the first year. Also, remember that whilst sucking is a natural reaction, babies have to learn to push food to the back of the mouth and swallow. So if your baby spits out the food initially it’s not a criticism of your home cooking! Babies should always be supervised when feeding.

**HANDY HINTS**

**4-5 MONTHS**
- Between 4-6 months your baby should have at least 4-5 milk feeds a day.
- Do not add any food to the milk for your baby’s bottle.
- Do not introduce cow’s milk as the main drink before one year.
- Do not add sugar or salt to your baby’s food.
- No raw fruit (except banana) or veg should be given at this stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Suggestion</th>
<th>FRUITS: Banana, apple, pear. (<em>no need to cook</em>)</th>
<th>VEGETABLES: Carrot, potato, swede, parsnip, pumpkin, sweet potato.</th>
<th>CEREALS: Baby rice mixed with baby’s usual milk.</th>
<th>DAIRY PRODUCTS: Whole milk yoghurts, hard cheese, fromage frais, cheese sauces.</th>
<th>MEAT &amp; MEAT SUBSTITUTES: (good sources of iron). Soft-cooked lean red meat, e.g. beef or lamb trimmed of fat or gristle, liver and chicken or turkey.</th>
<th>PULSES: e.g. lentils, split peas and tofu.</th>
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<td>Smooth, semi-liquid purées. Start with one tsp a day, increasing gradually to 2 to 3 tsp two or three times a day.</td>
<td>Smooth purées. 2 to 3 meals a day. Quantity will vary with each individual baby.</td>
<td>FRUITS: Apricot, plum, peach.</td>
<td>VEGETABLES: Peas (fresh or frozen), cauliflower, broccoli, spinach, tomatoes, (<em>mix these with potato, butternut squash or baby rice for a milder taste</em>).</td>
<td>CEREALS: Baby rice mixed with baby’s usual milk.</td>
<td>MEAT &amp; MEAT SUBSTITUTES: (good sources of iron). Soft-cooked lean red meat, e.g. beef or lamb trimmed of fat or gristle, liver and chicken or turkey.</td>
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**5-6 MONTHS**
- Your baby should still be having at least 4-5 milk feeds a day.
- Increase the variety of foods offered.
- No raw fruit (except banana) or veg should be given at this stage.

**6-9 MONTHS**
- Babies should have at least 560 ml (1 pint) of formula, iron-enriched follow-on milk or breast milk each day up to the age of one year.
- Having introduced a wide range of single ingredient purées you can start combining foods to make tasty meals for your baby.
- Try to encourage your baby to drink from a beaker or cup.
- From 6 months you can introduce raw soft fruit and veg, e.g. melon and tomatoes. All other hard fruit and veg should be cooked.

**HANDY HINTS**

**9-12 MONTHS**
- Continue to give at least 560 ml (1 pint) of breast milk, formula or iron-enriched follow-on milk every day.
- Lightly cooked or raw fruit and veg can be introduced at this stage.

**FOOD SUGGESTIONS**

**Chop, roughly puréed or mashed foods. Baby should have 3 main meals, and 2 to 3 snack meals during the day. Babies can now eat most foods with the exception of honey, raw or lightly cooked eggs, nuts (unless finely ground) and unpasteurised cheeses.**

- Introduce finger foods, e.g. low sugar rusk, baked bread fingers, chunks of cheese, mini sandwishes, pieces of chicken, chunks of fruit, vegetables such as carrots or cucumber sticks, and toast.
- Including vitamin C rich foods with your baby’s meal will help increase the absorption of iron from their food, e.g. orange or mandarin segments or sliced kiwi fruit.

**FRUIT:** Citrus fruits, berry fruits (sieve to get rid of the seeds), mango, grapes, (do not give whole grapes), cantaloupe melon, avocado.

**VEGETABLES:** Onion, leek, cabbage, sweetcorn, mushrooms, green beans.

**EGGS:** Hard boiled or well cooked eggs, e.g. omelette.

**FISH:** Soft, white fish, e.g. plaice or cod (remove all skin and bones).

**MEAT & MEAT SUBSTITUTES:** (good sources of iron). Lean red meat, e.g. beef or lamb trimmed of fat or gristle, liver, pork and chicken or turkey.

**PULSES:** e.g. lentils, split peas and tofu.

**CEREALS:** Weetabix, *Ready-Brek,* porridge, rice cakes, some wholemeal breads, rusks.

**PASTA:** Cooked until soft and mixed with vegetables, chicken or meat.