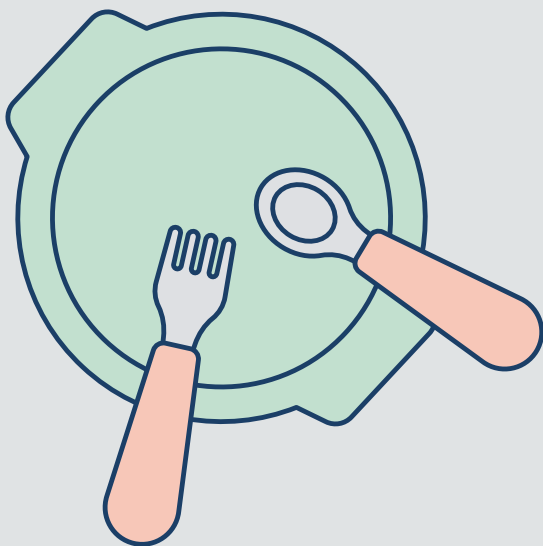




N GUIDE TO:

Weaning

Weaning marks an important transition in a child's growth and development, moving from exclusive milk and/or formula feeding to eating solid foods. This milestone comes at a time when a baby's body and brain are developing rapidly, requiring essential nutrients from food to support their growth and overall health.

From understanding when a baby is ready to take their first bite, the different approaches families can take, and what food groups are recommended, the weaning journey should be fun and filled with exploration - with a little bit of mess along the way!

Weaning readiness

At around six months, babies are learning lots of new cognitive, emotional and physical skills - the two sides of their brain are beginning to communicate and this helps them coordinate and interact with the world around them.

With this new found curiosity and movement, it is the ideal time to introduce the concept of solid foods to build on these skills, such as chewing, swallowing and self-feeding, and form the foundation for positive nutritional health. Evidence shows that children who receive a healthy, balanced diet from a young age go on to form healthy eating habits later in life.

There are key developmental cues to knowing when a baby is ready to begin weaning. These include - in line with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):

- Being able to maintain a sitting position and hold their head steady
- Coordinate their hands, eyes, and mouth, such as being able to pick up a piece of food and bring it to their mouth.
- Swallow food instead of pushing it back out

Approaches to weaning

Many families adopt a weaning method that best suits both their baby's preferences and needs, and their lifestyle.

The two most commonly used methods in weaning are baby-led and spoon-fed. Both encourage a baby to explore the taste and texture of food while acquiring new fine and gross motor skills - developing the pincer grip, hand-to-mouth coordination, controlling the head, maintaining a stable sitting position, and chewing and swallowing.

Baby-led weaning

Baby-led weaning is the method of allowing babies to feed themselves by offering soft finger foods.

The known benefits of baby-led weaning are:

- Encourages self-independence and hand-eye coordination
- Allows the baby to explore different textures
- Promotes healthy appetite control
- Enables a baby to join family mealtimes

Spoon-fed weaning

Spoon-fed weaning, or sometimes traditional weaning as it is known, involves feeding a baby from a spoon and progressing from smooth purees to mashed, lumpier textures and then on to finger foods.

The known benefits of spoon-fed weaning are:

- Allows a family to monitor how much a baby is eating
- Gradually introduces new tastes and textures in a controlled way
- Supports babies who may struggle with large food pieces

Ready to take the next step?

If you think your baby is ready to start weaning or you would like advice on how and when to embark on the journey, our team is here to support you every step of the way.

Visit nfamilyschool.com/food to discover more.

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