

Handy guide

Introducing solid foods

For parents, carers, health visitors, public health nurses
and community nursery nurses

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Waiting 6 months The benefits

Latest World Health Organisation shows babies need nothing other than breast milk or first formula for the first 6 months of life.

The benefits of waiting until 6 months:

- It gives babies digestive system time to develop so it can fully cope with solid foods
- Less risk of allergies / upset tummy / diarrhoea
- No need to puree can just mash / chop foods
- Baby can begin to feed themselves and will enjoy finger foods
- Can have cow's milk in foods, use full fat milk
- Can eat most foods (No added salt, no honey or whole nuts and avoid sugar)

Pre-term babies

Solids can be introduced between about 5 and 8 months from birth for many babies born pre-term. Some pre-term babies will be under the care of a paediatrician and the paediatrician / HV may be supporting parents about decisions on when to introduce solids for certain babies.

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What is introducing solids?

By the time a baby is around 6 months old, they need more than breast milk or first infant formula. At this stage, they need solid foods – not as a replacement, but alongside their usual breast milk or first infant formula. Introducing solids teaches your baby how to move food around their mouth, chew and swallow. The signs that they are ready include:

- **Baby can stay sitting** and hold their head steady
- **Baby can see food**, reach for it, pick it up and put it in their mouth by themselves
- **Baby can swallow food**
- **A baby will push food back out of their mouth** if they are not ready for solids

Solid food How to get started

To start with, a baby only needs a small amount of solid food, once a day. You can start solids with single vegetables and fruits – blended, mashed, or soft cooked sticks of parsnip, broccoli, potato, yam, sweet potato, carrot, apple or pear.

It's important to introduce foods that can trigger allergic reactions one at a time, in very small amounts, so that you can spot any reaction. These foods can be introduced from around 6 months as part of a baby's diet, just like any other foods.

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References and other resources

The NHS Start4Life website is a great resource with videos and guidance on the introduction of solid foods.

The site also provides recipes and meal advice as well as guidance on safety.

Further information please visit the following:

www.bliss.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/start4life/

www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/First-aid/Mobile-app

www.nhs.uk/choking-baby

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Vegetarianhealth/Pages/Vegetarianhealthhome.aspx

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