



# Introducing solids for babies following a milk free diet

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**This leaflet is for parents and carers of babies with a milk allergy. It describes how to start your child on solid food when they are on a milk free diet.**

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## When is the right time to start introducing food (solids)?

Breast milk or infant formula usually provides all the food and drink a baby needs for the first 4 to 6 months of life. Every baby is different; some babies may be ready for food before others. You may notice the following signs that a baby is ready to start eating solid food between the ages of 4-6 months:

- Staying in a sitting position, holding their head steady.
- Co-ordinating their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at their food, pick it up and put it in their mouth.
- Swallowing food rather than spitting it back out.

Some behaviours can be mistaken for signs of being ready. They include:

- Chewing fists.
- Wanting extra milk feeds.
- Waking up in the night (more than usual).
- Waking at night when they had previously slept through. Your child may start doing this between 3-5 months of age. It may simply indicate that the child is more aware of their surroundings.

For more information about signs your baby is ready to wean, visit [www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/how-to-start-weaning-your-baby/#signs](http://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/how-to-start-weaning-your-baby/#signs)

## Some helpful tips for successful weaning

- ✓ Start by offering 1-2 teaspoons of solids at one feed in the day.
- ✓ Try to choose a time when your baby is not too tired or too hungry.
- ✓ First foods need to have a smooth, lump-free consistency.
- ✓ Do not add sugar, honey or salt.
- ✓ Gradually increase both the quantity of solids offered, and the number of times your baby has solids in the day. Don't worry if new foods you offer are refused. Try the same food again on another day.
- ✓ Introduce a cup from 6 months of age.
- ✓ Gradually progress with type, amount and textures of the food that you offer to your baby.
- ✓ As your baby eats more solid food, they may want less milk at each feed or even drop a milk feed altogether. It is best for babies to drink breast milk or their specialist prescribed



hypoallergenic milk free infant formula for at least the first year. You can carry on with breast milk for as long as you both want. From 12 months, cow's milk substitute such as fortified soya and oat milk is fine as their main drink.

- ✓ *Vitamin D is recommended for breastfed babies from birth. It is also recommended that children from 6 months to 4 years of age, who are drinking less than 500ml of milk free infant formula, should take a multivitamin supplement that contains vitamin A, C and D (for example Healthy Start Vitamins: <http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>).*
- ✓ Weaning can get messy and it is an important part of your baby's development. You may want to cover the floor with newspaper or a protective mat to make clearing up easier.
- ✓ Babies copy their parents and other children – you can help them by showing them that you eat healthier foods. Babies enjoy watching you eat and learn from being a part of family mealtimes. Help them join in by talking to them and giving them food when you or the rest of the family is eating. Having mealtimes around the same time every day can make it easier for your baby to know when to expect to eat.
- ✓ **Finger foods.** Let your baby feed themselves with their fingers. This way they can show you how much they want to eat, and it gets them familiar with different types of food. It also makes eating more enjoyable. As a guide, the best finger foods are foods that can be cut up into pieces that are big enough for your baby to hold in their fist and stick out of the top of it. Pieces about the size of your own finger work well.
- ✓ Babies like to choose for themselves and sometimes take their time getting used to different foods. It may take 10 tries or more for your baby to get used to new foods, flavours and textures. Keep offering a small amount, lots of times, to let them gradually get used to new foods.



## Homemade foods

Homemade foods can be a lot cheaper than readymade baby foods. They may take a bit longer to prepare. Cook larger portions and freeze the food in clean ice cube trays and store in new freezer bags. Make sure you defrost the food and heat it up thoroughly when you're ready to feed it to your child.



## Readymade baby foods

Jars, tins, packets and pouches of baby food that are milk free and milk product free are suitable for your baby. Always check the labels carefully.

## Which solid foods are best introduced first?

Many foods can cause allergies and the main ones affecting infants and children are allergies to milk, eggs, soya, wheat and nuts. There is no evidence that pushing back the introduction of other foods into your baby's diet beyond the recommended weaning age of 6 months has any benefit in preventing other allergies. Delaying weaning or restricting the diet more than is needed can lead to feeding difficulties later.

## **Tips on introducing new foods when your child has a diagnosed cow's milk allergy:**

- ✓ Begin with foods such as root and green vegetables, fruit, rice and potatoes, at a texture that is appropriate for your child.
- ✓ Chicken, meat and pulses may be introduced next. Use a little of your baby's usual milk (breast or hypoallergenic formula) to mix the food to the desired consistency.
- ✓ Try a cooked version of a new food first and increase amounts gradually.
- ✓ Introduce new foods into their diet one at a time and only give small amounts, early in the day, so that any allergic symptoms can be noticed later in the day. If no symptoms have been noticed after trialling a new food for 2 to 3 days, then another new food can be introduced.
- ✓ We recommend including other common allergens in the diet from the age of 6 months, as long as your child is not allergic to them. These common allergens include soya, wheat, egg, peanuts and other nuts, sesame seeds, mustard seed, celery, fish and shellfish.
- ✓ Always offer young children eggs that have been well-cooked.
- ✓ Whole nuts are not safe for children under 3 years of age and should not be offered as they can cause choking. Nut butters (including peanut butter) can be used instead and added to breakfast cereal in the morning.
- ✓ Current advice is to introduce all common allergenic foods that your child is not allergic to, and which are part of your family's usual diet before one year of age.



Further information can be found at: [www.allergyuk.org/information-and-advice/conditions-and-symptoms/42-childhood-food-allergy](http://www.allergyuk.org/information-and-advice/conditions-and-symptoms/42-childhood-food-allergy)

## **Weaning stages**

From the time you start introducing foods, to around 1 year of age, we recommend a gradual change in:

- The type of food your baby is offered.
- The amount of food your baby is offered.
- The texture of food your baby is offered.

The table on the next page outlines how you could gradually wean a child with cow's milk allergy.

	What texture?	How much?	How often?	Helpful hints	Examples of foods
<b>Starting off</b> Around 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puree cooked or soft foods: start off with a tomato ketchup like consistency moving to firmer purees similar to the consistency of porridge.</li> <li>Offer soft finger foods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin with 1-2 teaspoons, gradually increasing the amount when your baby is ready to eat more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer once a day to start with – during or after milk feed substitute.</li> <li>Gradually increase the amount and number of times food is offered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooked and soft foods can be made into puree by passing them through a sieve.</li> <li>You can use cow's milk free spreads, in cooking.</li> <li>Finger foods can be used as part of messy play to allow your baby to familiarise themselves with foods.</li> <li>From 6 months, plant-based milk can be added to weaning foods.</li> </ul>	First foods can include small amounts of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Root vegetables e.g. carrot, sweet potato, swede, parsnip, butternut squash.</li> <li>Green vegetables e.g. spinach, broccoli, green beans.</li> <li>Fruits, e.g. stewed apples, pears, banana, plum, peach, apricot.</li> <li>Potato, yam, green banana.</li> <li>Milk free baby rice, milk free baby cereals and milk free yoghurts. Puree meat, fish, chicken and lentils.</li> <li>Soft finger foods like melon, avocado, banana, cooked carrot sticks, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Moving on</b> Around 7-9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradually move onto mashed and lumpier foods, which encourage your child to chew.</li> <li>Offer soft finger foods.</li> <li>If using ready-made baby food, move onto 7-month jars.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Servings can still be small.</li> <li>Include meat, fish, chicken, eggs or lentils in at least 1 meal a day.</li> <li>Try to offer 2-3 servings of starchy foods e.g. mashed potato, rice and pasta and 2 servings of fruit and vegetable a day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradually increase the number of meals offered in a day, with the aim of 3 meals per day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer meal before milk substitute milk feed.</li> <li>Offer a variety of foods.</li> <li>Use finger foods to encourage your baby to feed themselves.</li> <li>Look for the range of plant-based foods available – milk, cheese and yogurts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All fruit and vegetables.</li> <li>Rice, e.g. baby rice, ground quinoa, pasta, noodles.</li> <li>Breakfast cereal and porridge with plant-based milk.</li> <li>Meat and fish, e.g. lamb, pork, beef, chicken and flaked salmon/cod.</li> <li>Lentils and pulses, e.g. mashed haricot, kidney, butter beans.</li> <li>Plant-based foods including yogurts – coconut, oat and soya options.</li> <li>Soft finger foods like rice cakes, orange or yellow peppers, toast with dairy free spread.</li> </ul>

	What texture?	How much?	How often?	Helpful hints	Examples of foods
<b>Family meals</b> Around 9-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move onto chopped up foods and finger foods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 small servings of meat, fish, eggs or lentils.</li> <li>3-4 small servings of starchy food and 3-4 servings of fruit and vegetables.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Try to have a regular routine – 3 meals a day with small snacks in between.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer your baby family foods to get them familiar with the flavours.</li> <li>Avoid adding salt or sugar to your baby's food.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chopped meals, sandwiches and a variety of finger foods.</li> <li>Snacks could be fruit, vegetable sticks, toast, rice cakes and a cup of milk substitute.</li> </ul>

*Formula, breast milk and fortified plant-based milk can be mixed with cereal or used in cooking. From 12 months of age, fortified plant-based milk can be taken as a drink.*

*This table has been adapted from <https://www.ndr-uk.org/> Milk Free Weaning booklet 2022*

**Example meal pattern**

	<b>Starting off</b> Around 6 months	<b>Moving on</b> Around 7-9 months	<b>Family meals</b> Around 9-12 months
<b>Drinks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a cup from around six months and offer sips of water with meals. Using an open cup or a free flow cup without a valve will help your baby learn to sip and is better for your baby's teeth.</li> <li>• Breast milk, milk substitute, water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk, milk substitute, water.</li> <li>• Offer drinks from a cup or beaker.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk, milk substitute, water.</li> <li>• Offer drinks from a cup or beaker.</li> </ul>
<b>Amount of milk substitute</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim for 600 ml / 20 fl.oz / 1 pint of milk substitute per day, either as drink or in pudding or in cereal.</li> </ul>		
<b>On waking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>
<b>Breakfast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk free baby rice and fruit puree. Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cereal, e.g. porridge or whole wheat biscuit type cereal and milk substitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cereal with milk substitute.</li> <li>• Toast with milk-free margarine.</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch and dinner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puree or soft meat, fish or lentils with vegetables.</li> <li>• Mashed fruit and milk-free custard or milk-free pureed rice puddings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minced meat, flaked fish or cooked lentils with mashed vegetables and potatoes.</li> <li>• Mashed fruit and milk-free custard or milk-free pureed rice puddings or soya yoghurt.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chopped meat or fish with soft cooked potatoes or pasta and vegetables, or cooked lentils with rice and chapatti.</li> <li>• Fruit with milk-free custard or milk-free rice pudding or plant-based yoghurt</li> </ul>
<b>Snacks</b>	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice cakes, breadsticks, toast with milk-free margarine, fruit, vegetable sticks with dip, plant-based yoghurts, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Bedtime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast milk or milk substitute.</li> </ul>

*This table has been adapted from <https://www.ndr-uk.org/> Milk Free Weaning booklet 2022*

## Useful contacts:

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any queries, please contact the branch of the Dietetic Department your child is seen by on:

- Royal Berkshire Hospital Dietitians: 0118 322 7116
- East Berkshire Community Dietitian 0118 904 3250
- West Berkshire Community Dietitians 0118 904 3251
- CYPF Berkshire Dietitians: 0118 904 6777

## References:

- NHS Website: [Your baby's first solid foods – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) October 22
- [www.ndr-uk.org/](http://www.ndr-uk.org/) Milk Free Weaning booklet 2022

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Produced by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Dietitians

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