

Introducing solids for babies following a milk free diet

This leaflet is for parents and carers of babies with a milk allergy. It outlines how to wean your child onto solid food while maintaining a milk free diet.

When is the right time to start introducing solids?

Breast milk or infant formula can provide all the nourishment your child needs for the first 4 to 6 months of life. Remember that every baby is different; therefore, you can use their signs of readiness, which may include the following, between the ages of 4-6 months to know when is the best time to introduce solids:

- Chewing fists.
- Showing interest in other people's food.
- Crying between feeds.
- Waking at night when they had previously slept through – however, your child may start doing this between 3-5 months of age so this should not be used as a reason alone to start introducing solids. It may simply indicate that the child is more aware of their surroundings.



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 should have a smooth, lump-free consistency.
- ✓ Do not add sugar 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.
- ✓ As your baby eats more solid food, they may want less milk at each feed or even drop a milk feed altogether. Babies should have breast milk (or specialist prescribed milk free infant formula) for at least the first year, and can carry on with breast milk for as long as you both want. From 12 months, cow's milk substitute such as soya milk is fine as their main drink. *It is 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 but this 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 so 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, so offer a small amount lots of times to let them gradually get used to new foods
- ✓ Introduce a cup from 6 months.

Homemade foods

Homemade foods can be a lot cheaper than readymade baby foods but 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 and heat 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 and milk product free are suitable for your baby. Always check the labels carefully.

Which solid foods should I introduce first?

There are many foods that people can potentially be allergic to, although the main food allergies affecting infants and children are allergies to milk, eggs, soya, wheat and nuts. There is no evidence that delaying the introduction of other foods into your baby's diet beyond the recommended weaning age 6 months will have any benefit in terms of preventing other allergies. Delaying weaning or restricting the diet more than is necessary can lead to feeding difficulties later on.



Some tips how to introduce 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 to give only small amounts, early on in the day so that any allergic symptoms can be noticed later on. If no symptoms have been noticed after trialling a new food for 2 to 3 days then another new foods can be introduced.
- ✓ Other common allergens, including soya, wheat, egg, peanuts and other nuts, sesame seeds, mustard seed, celery, fish and shellfish should be included in the diet from the age of 6 months provided your child is not allergic to them .

- ✓ Eggs should always be in a well-cooked form when given to young children.
- ✓ Nuts should not be given whole to children under age 3 years.
- ✓ 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

Weaning stages

From the time you start introducing foods, to around 1 year of age, there should be 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 has outlined a guidance of how you could gradually work through weaning with your child considering their cow's milk allergy.

	What texture?	How much?	How often?	Helpful hints	Examples of foods
Starting off Around 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smooth puree: Start off with a tomato ketchup like consistency moving to firmer purees similar to the consistency of porridge. Offer soft finger foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin with 1-2 teaspoons, gradually increasing the amount when your baby is ready to eat more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer once a day to start with – during or after milk feed substitute. Gradually increase the amount and number of times food is offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooked and soft foods can be made into puree by passing them through a sieve. You can use cow's milk free spreads, e.g. Pure Sunflower in cooking. Finger foods can be used as part of messy play to allow your baby to familiarise themselves with foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with fruits, e.g. stewed apples, pears, and vegetables, e.g. carrots, parsnips, swede, potatoes. Also with potatoes, milk free baby rice, milk free baby cereals and milk free yoghurts. Then introduce puree meat, fish, chicken and lentils. Soft finger foods like melon, avocado, banana, cooked carrot sticks, etc.
Moving on Around 7-9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradually move onto mashed and softer lumpier foods, which encourage your child to chew. Gradually moving onto harder finger foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Servings can still be small. Include meat, fish, chicken, eggs or lentils in at least 1 meal a day. Try to offer 2-3 servings of starchy foods and 2 servings of fruit and vegetable a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradually increase number of meals offered in a day with the aim of 3 meals per day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer meal before milk substitute milk feed. Your baby's diet should consist of a variety of the following types of food. Use finger foods to encourage your baby to feed themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit and vegetables; bread, rice, pasta, potatoes and other starchy foods; meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein and milk free calcium rich substitutes, e.g. soya yoghurts. Finger foods like rice cakes, peppers, toast with dairy free spread.
Family meals Around 9-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move onto chopped up foods and finger foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 small servings of meat, fish, eggs or lentils. 3-4 small servings of starchy food and 3-4 servings of fruits and vegetables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to have a regular routine – 3 meals a day with small snacks in between. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer your baby family foods to get them familiar with the flavours. Avoid adding salt to your baby's foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chopped meals, sandwiches and a variety finger foods. Snacks could be fruit, vegetable sticks, toast, rice cakes and a cup of milk substitute.

This table has been adapted from SNDRi Milk Free Weaning booklet

Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent

Example meal pattern

	Starting off Around 6 months	Moving on Around 7-9 months	Family meals Around 9-12 months
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Breast milk, milk substitute, water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk, milk substitute, water. • Offer drinks from a cup or beaker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk, milk substitute, water. • Offer drinks from a cup or beaker.
Amount of milk substitute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for 600 ml / 20 fl.oz / 1 pint of milk substitute per day, either as drink or in pudding or in cereal. 		
On waking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or milk substitute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or milk substitute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or milk substitute.
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk free baby rice and fruit puree. Breast milk or milk substitute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereal, e.g. porridge or whole wheat biscuit type cereal and milk substitute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereal with milk substitute. • Toast with milk-free margarine.
Lunch and dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puree meat, fish or lentils with vegetables. • Mashed fruit and milk-free custard or milk-free pureed rice puddings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minced meat, flaked fish or cooked lentils with mashed vegetables and potatoes. • Mashed fruit and milk-free custard or milk-free pureed rice puddings or soya yoghurt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chopped meat or fish with soft cooked potatoes or pasta and vegetables, or cooked lentils with rice and chapatti. • Fruit with milk-free custard or milk-free rice pudding or soya yoghurt.
Snacks	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice cakes, breadsticks, toast with milk-free margarine, fruit, vegetable sticks with dip, soya yoghurts, etc.
Bedtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or milk substitute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or milk substitute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast milk or milk substitute.

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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 01753 636724
- West Berkshire Community Dietitians 01635 273710
- CYPIT East Berkshire Dietitians: 01753 635073
- CYPIT West Berkshire Dietitians: 0118 918 0571

References:

- NHS Website: [Your baby's first solid foods – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk) March 2019
- The BDA Food Allergy Specialist Group – Cow's Milk Free Diet for Infants and Children 2020
- SNDRi Milk Free Weaning Booklet

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

Produced by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Dietitians

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