



## Weaning Handbook

# Weaning babies

There are two main methods of weaning babies, traditional weaning and baby-led weaning. Both methods have their pros. Let's look at the differences:

## Traditional weaning

- Can be started at 4 months for medical reasons but is recommended at 6 months.
- Starts off with smooth purees that are just one vegetable at a time, adding more once the child has tasted it.
- More tastes and flavours are added. It's a slower process of adding just vegetables before adding carbs and meats to the purees.
- The texture of the puree is slowly made lumpier over time depending on how the child is coping with it.



## Baby-led weaning

- Can not be started until 6 months and when the child has reached certain milestones such as sitting independently.
- The child is given the same foods which would normally be eaten at mealtimes by the parents, just adapted slightly for the child by cutting differently and not adding ingredients such as salt.
- The child is in control of what they put in their mouths and how much they eat.
- Needs to be prepped in an appropriate way.



# Traditional weaning

With traditional weaning you should wait until your baby is 6 months old. This can be done earlier but only under the instruction from a health visitor or GP for medical reasons. Babies need to be able to stay in a seated position with support and be able to hold their heads up independently. Traditional weaning is done in 3 stages:

## **Stage 1: introducing solid foods**

This is done around 6 months of age introducing one taste at a time with smooth purees.

## **Stage 2: more textures and tastes**

This is done around 7 months adding more textures with lumpier puree and adding more tastes in one meal instead of single flavours. This is also when finger foods can be introduced.

## **Stage 3: wider variety**

This is done between 9-12 months thickening the textures and adding more flavours until the baby is eating normal family foods.



## Baby-led weaning

Baby-led weaning is another method of weaning a baby. This method cannot be started until 6 months of age and the baby must be able to sit independently unsupported to ensure the stomach muscles are strong enough to deal with gagging. With baby-led weaning you offer food normally eaten at home but adapted to help the child. Baby-led weaning is all about the child being in control and exploring foods. With baby-led weaning you have to ensure foods are cut appropriately for the right age of the child. This includes everything from different ways to serve meats to cutting certain fruits and vegetables. There are some foods which are not appropriate to serve to certain ages at all due to health reasons, but mostly because of the choking risk.

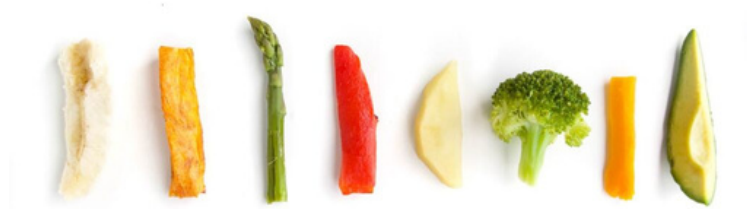


## Cutting foods appropriately

With baby-led weaning and when the child gets to finger foods with traditional weaning its important to ensure the foods are cut appropriately to minimise the risks of choking, these foods should be tested before serving and you must ensure it is able to break using your fingertips. Here are some examples below:

### 6-8/9 months

Everything should be cut into finger shaped foods, both length and width, this is to give the child full control over how much they put into their mouths and how much they bite off, this shape also allows the child to be more independent as at this age children only tend to use a palmer grip. Below is an example:



[healthylittlefoodies.com](http://healthylittlefoodies.com)

## 9-12 months

At this age finger shaped foods are desirable, but you can also introduced certain diced foods. These should be soft foods to help develop children's fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Diced foods are less of choking risk now they are more confident with their mouth muscles.



[jennahelwig.com](http://jennahelwig.com)

## 12+ months

Can be given foods in a mixture of ways depending on what works best for the child. Some may not have grasped the pincer grip very well at this stage, so would still benefit from finger shapes. High risk foods should still be avoided for choking hazards.



# Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

<b>Vegetable and fruits</b>	<b>Advice</b>
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
<b>Meat and fish</b>	<b>Advice</b>
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish. It will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
<b>Cheese</b>	<b>Advice</b>
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
<b>Nuts and seeds</b>	<b>Advice</b>
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
<b>Bread</b>	<b>Advice</b>
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
<b>Snacks and other foods</b>	<b>Advice</b>
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

## Choking vs gagging

Gagging and choking can easily be confused. Gagging is a natural reflex when a baby is weaning and is far more common than choking. These are the differences:

Gagging is the automatic body function that prevents a person from choking. Gagging is loud. The child's skin may look a little red, however this may be harder to see on darker skin. Gagging is normal when introducing solids. The child is learning how much food they can chew and swallow at one time.

Choking is when something is stuck in the child's throat and stopping them from breathing. Choking is quiet. The child may start turning blue. If the child has darker skin, their fingernails, gums or inside their lips may start turning blue.

### What to do if an infant is choking

If you think an infant is choking and cannot breathe properly:

- call for help
- take them out of the high chair
- support their chest and chin with one hand and using the heel of your hand give 5 sharp blows between the shoulder blades