

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Supporting parents with baby-led weaning

A [government campaign](#) to provide advice to parents about baby-led weaning was launched after research found that 40% of first-time mothers introduced solid food before their baby was five months old, while NHS advice recommends babies should be around six months old before solid foods are introduced.

The research found that “weaning is a key milestone within the first 1,001 critical days, influencing children’s eating habits and their health later in life and improving babies abilities to move food around their mouth, chew and swallow.”

Remember each parent and family will develop their own way of weaning that suits them and their young child.



Many parents are likely to use a mixture of weaning techniques depending on their busy lifestyles, such as using pre-prepared frozen pureed foods after a busy day at work and baby-led weaning at other times.

These top tips are based on the [NHS weaning advice](#).

- Babies can be introduced to a varied diet of solid foods alongside their milk from six months onwards
- If a baby is showing these three signs, it means they are ready for weaning:
- Stay in a sitting position, holding their head steady
- Coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at food, pick it up and put it in their mouth
- Swallow food, rather than push it back out
- When a baby can move food around their mouth, chew and swallow then they will be able to cope with mashed, lumpy and finger foods
- Remember that there will be days when babies eat more, some when they eat less, and days when they reject everything. This is perfectly normal behaviour and does not mean that they don't like the food
- Babies will often make faces when they try new foods for the first few times. This is also normal and indicates that they are distinguishing between tastes and textures. Continue to offer a range of flavours and textures
- Often, there is a concern that babies will choke on food. Always make sure that an adult sits with a child who is weaning to make sure that they are chewing and swallowing effectively. Remember that gagging is a normal reflex which will occur as babies learn to chew and swallow solid foods. Gagging

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is loud, choking is quiet. While a gagging baby may go red in the face, a choking baby will look blue. On brown and black skin, redness is harder to notice and blueness will be noticeable on the gums, inside the lips or under the fingernails

- Make sure weaning babies are offered foods which are the correct size by following the Food Standards Agency 'Early years food choking hazards'. This includes cutting foods into narrow strips and removing pips or stones. It also advises on foods which are not suitable for young children such as popcorn, marshmallows, whole nuts, jelly cubes and so on.

NDNA products to support you

- [Millie's Mark](#)
- Factsheet: [Baby-led weaning](#)

Find more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna