



**Early Learning Initiative**  
National College of Ireland




*Ready. Steady.*  
**Wean**

## FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We put up regular content which is aimed at giving parents ideas and inspiration to support their child's Early childhood education.

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### Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland

'The Healthy Ireland Fund supported by the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs'



Kilbarrack na Míreann  
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government supporting communities



Building an inclusive community



Area Based Childhood  
Programme



An Fíor Leas  
agus Oibríocht Oige  
Department of  
Children and Youth Affairs

TÚSLA  
An Chomhairle Náisiúil um  
Scoil agus na Tíortha  
Chúigeacha



## Enjoy your weaning journey with some handy tips

Try to stay calm and relaxed; remember that you're doing great!

You are your baby's first and best teacher and know your baby's needs.

Try new foods with your baby; as babies get older they'll copy you and like to eat what they see you eating



*Keep going, you've got this*

Pick a time of day that suits you when you don't feel rushed or stressed, and when baby is alert and not too hungry (mid-morning to lunchtime works well but pick a time that works best for you)

There will be some mess! That's ok and completely normal as your baby learns by touching and playing with food & getting messy



**TIP!**

Have some bibs/muslin cloths close by. Put newspaper on the floor if you like

## It's about more than just food!

### Weaning can support:

social  
development

speech & language  
development



## When can I safely start weaning my baby?

### Why is it important to introduce solids between 4-6 months old?

- Baby's digestive system isn't developed to cope with solid food
- Their kidneys aren't mature enough
- May not have head control & ability to move food to the back of the mouth
- Breast or formula milk is all they need at this age



### We start no later than 26 weeks (6 months):

- Baby needs more iron from food by 6 months old & energy needs can't be met by milk alone
- Textures help develop their mouth muscles needed for speech development
- Skills needed for life like self-feeding and accepting new foods





## Weaning a Premature baby:

HSE's mychild.ie says if your baby was born early (before 37 weeks) you should begin introducing foods other than milk sometime between 'corrected age' 4 and 6 months. Corrected age, or adjusted age, is your baby's age minus the number of weeks or months they were born early.

i.e. your baby is 24 weeks old but was born 5 weeks early so their corrected age= 19 weeks.

## Signs your baby is ready to start weaning

- Good Head control
- Baby's able to sit with little support
- Unsatisfied after milk feeds, looking for more feeds & interested in your food!

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## How much should I give?

At first your baby might only take 1 or 2 spoons of food. You'll gradually increase the number of spoons you offer, doing this 1-3 times a day. At this stage your aim is getting them used to the spoon and introducing texture to your baby's mouth, rather than providing a lot of extra nourishment.



## Is my baby getting enough?

As you increase spoonful's of food, your baby's milk intake will decrease

Regular growth checks with your Public Health Nurse (PHN) or G.P will help keep you informed. If you have any concerns, please speak to them.

Read your baby's cues and remember to trust your instincts- you know best “



## Stages 1-3 and Food ideas

Let's take a look at the 3 stages of weaning and some simple recipe and food ideas to try. You will need a blender, liquidiser or a sieve and.....



## Stage 1: 4 months (17 weeks)- 6 months

Stage 1 is more about getting them used to textures and new flavours and less about the amount of food baby eats.

It's normal for baby to seem to spit out food at first; they're just exploring



Start with thin, very runny purees of vegetable first and then fruit as it's naturally sweeter. You'll help set up healthy food habits for life.

Start off with 1 teaspoon and build up slowly to 1- 6 teaspoons, progress to 2-3 times a day



## Carrot Purée

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Wash carrot under cold running water, peel, and slice

Steam or boil veg in small amounts of water until soft.

Add into a blender or food processor. You can add breast or formula milk or veg juices from the pot if the texture is too thick.



## Sweet Potato Purée

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Scrub the potatoes & poke with a skewer or fork

Roast in the oven for 45 mins or until wrinkled and tender

Remove from oven, cut in half and scoop out the flesh and puree in a blender, adding breast or formula milk to get the right consistency for your baby.

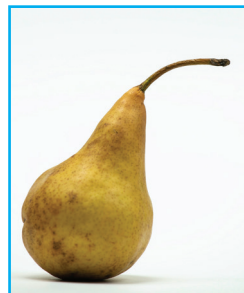


## Stewed Pear

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Wash the pear under cold running water. Peel, cut and remove any seeds if necessary. Steam or boil the fruit in small amounts of water until soft.

Add into a blender or food processor, adding breast or formula milk if you want to make it a runnier consistency





## Stage 2: 6-9 months

Stage 2 introduces foods a little lumpier in texture to your baby. The consistency should be minced or mashed textures and soft finger foods. Your baby will learn to chew lumps and start drinking from a beaker or a lidded cup.

Aim for 3 meals a day, each about 2 to 4 tablespoons.

You can start offering finger foods as well as chicken, fish or red meat to your baby (remove all bones), well-cooked eggs, pasta and bread and try combining flavours but remember not to add salt.

### Avocado Smash - no cooking involved!

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1. Cut in half, remove stone and scoop out the ripe avocado flesh into a bowl
2. Add 1-2tbsp of cooled boiled water or baby's usual milk. Mash with the back of a fork until smooth or leave chunky

**\*Meat Variation:** Cook half a chicken breast fillet (boneless, skinless) in boiling water for 10 mins. When cooled, cut into pieces and put into a blender with some avocado pieces. Blend until you're happy with the consistency, adding baby's milk if needed.

## Stage 3: 9-12 months

In this stage, food will be lumpier and can be chopped. You'll now mash less and add less milk, so the texture becomes thicker.

Aim for 3 meals of about 4 to 6 tablespoons each. Your baby can move onto more family foods and will learn new skills like:

**\*Chewing** minced and chopped foods, moving lumps in their mouth and self-feeding bite-size pieces of food using hands, fingers and a spoon



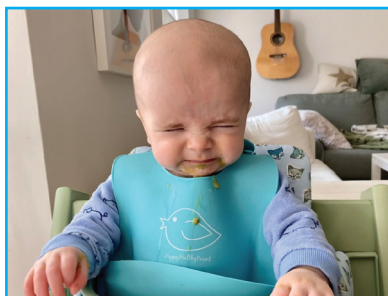
## Simple Creamy Salmon Pasta- great if you don't have much time or space

1. Cook 2 tablespoons of small pasta bows or shells (or baby pasta stars) cooked until soft
2. Take 2 heaped tablespoons drained canned salmon- (flake with a fork to ensure no bones)  
\*(if using fresh salmon, put tin foil on top and oven bake for 25 mins)  
Place the fish in a saucepan with 1 tablespoon cream cheese and warm together
3. Drain the cooked pasta and add it to the creamy salmon mixture, stir well together.



### TIP!

*Did you know?* It can take babies up to 15 times to accept a new taste or texture of food. If they refuse, wait and offer that food again in 5 to 7 days



## Baby-led weaning

This is a style of feeding that allows the baby to feed themselves. You give your child the choice by offering them food to eat themselves rather than be spoon fed.

Some parents choose to combine baby-led weaning with spoon-fed weaning; offering purees and finger-foods. *Remember you know best, and what will work for your child.*

**Finger foods:** can be given from around 7 months+, cut to your finger-length.  
Here's just a few ideas:



- Pitta, naan bread or toast strips with hummus
- Meat Strips of freshly cooked tender meat or chicken, with skin removed
- Plain rice cake, or unsalted crackers
- Softly cooked bread, well-cooked pasta bows or shells, Small pancake
- Small, soft pieces of peeled fruit like ripe pear, banana, peach, nectarine, mango, melon, kiwi or
- Soft cooked sticks of vegetables, carrot, parsnip, green beans, turnip Soft cooked baby sweet-corn, mange tout, sugar snap peas



## What drinks can I give my baby?

From birth, breast milk or formula milk meets your baby's needs for food and drink to help them grow and develop.



**6 months+**

Using a cup or beaker



**12 months**

By 12 months of age, aim to have baby using a non-lidded beaker for all drinks other than breastfeeds

**6 months old** will help your baby's mouth muscles and swallow to develop (Tap and bottled water need to be boiled and then cooled)

**12 months+** Try to gradually reduce bottles over time with the aim of not using them by 12 months. Cow's milk can be given from 12 months+ in a cup



## These drinks are not suitable for babies

These affect baby's iron levels, sleep patterns and acid can cause tummy pains



## Gagging and Choking

Gagging is a normal reflex in babies who are learning to eat and chew. The food is brought forward in baby's mouth so they can try to chew it. Don't worry, gagging will lessen as baby gets more familiar with lumpier textures



Loud and **RED**,  
let them go ahead



Quiet and **BLUE**,  
they need help from you

## Allergies

There is no need to avoid certain foods to try to prevent allergies. Introduce foods one at a time to observe baby's reaction. Family history of allergies? Talk to your nurse or GP.

Gluten can be added into your baby's diet starting off with small amounts; foods like pasta, bread, crackers and breakfast cereals can be introduced anytime between 4 months (17 weeks) and 12 months of age (in a texture and consistency suited their weaning stage at the time)



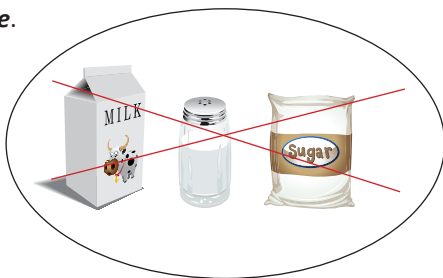
### TIP!

Nut butters can be given to your baby from 6 months as an easy way to introduce different nuts one at a time. Pastes like almond, cashew, hazelnut or peanut pastes can stick to the roof of baby's mouth, so adding them into warm porridge can help soften them.



## Foods to Avoid under 1 year old

Some foods must be avoided for babies under 12 months old. Here are just a few; more information can be found through your nurse or GP or [www.mychild.ie](http://www.mychild.ie).



## Homemade & Shop-bought baby food

Some points to think about when making food at home and buying in the shop.



### Homemade

- You know exactly what is in it and can decide what ingredients to use
- Less wasteful
- Batch cooking- often can be cheaper
- You'll need a blender and time/space to cook



### Shop-bought

- Can be handy and convenient
- Can be expensive & sometimes wasteful
- Unsure about salt & sugar quantities



When you can, pour pouches into a bowl to feed to your baby- this encourages baby to use their mouth muscles instead of sucking from the pouch





## Freezing homemade food

Cooking large batches of food at home saves time and money  
Once cooked and cooled, store food in the freezer and defrost as needed.

### Here are some handy storage ideas

Ice cube trays and muffin trays are ideal for freezing baby food in smaller batches- just pop the frozen cubes out as needed and defrost.



- Ice cube tray for smaller portions
- Baking/muffin tray for bigger portions
- An empty butter or yogurt carton is handy to use for bigger batches as your baby's portion sizes increase





## Defrosting your baby's food

Frozen food can be left out at room temperature or defrosted in the microwave.

When it is defrosted, make sure to heat it up straightaway and feed it to your baby and remember defrosted food cannot be put back into the freezer. If heating up food in the microwave- stir the food really well to get rid of "hot spots" that could burn the baby's mouth.



## SOME USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- [www.first1000days.ie](http://www.first1000days.ie)
- [www.solidstart.ie](http://www.solidstart.ie)
- <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/weaning/weaning-starting-your-baby-on-solid-foods.html>
- <https://www.srnutrition.co.uk/2020/04/gagging-vs-choking>

## Parent and Child Community Groups

The ABC Parent and child groups aim to help parents learn about their child's development while providing fun experiences for children age 0-4.5 years old. Our play groups help parents to build a support network by meeting others, getting new ideas and learning about other supports available in the area.

For more information please contact Senior Coordinator  
Alison Pidgeon: [alison.pidgeon@ncirl.ie](mailto:alison.pidgeon@ncirl.ie).

For more information please contact Coordinator Marie Boyne:  
[Marie.Boyne@ncirl.ie](mailto:Marie.Boyne@ncirl.ie)

## GET INVOLVED! ELI PROGRAMME INFORMATION

### PARENT AND CHILD COMMUNITY GROUPS



For more information contact Coordinator  
Ali Pidgeon: [alison.pidgeon@ncirl.ie](mailto:alison.pidgeon@ncirl.ie)

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### 0-2 HOME VISITING PROGRAMME:



For more information contact 0-2 coordinator  
Marion Byrne [marion.byrne@ncirl.ie](mailto:marion.byrne@ncirl.ie)

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### PARENTCHILD+ HOME PROGRAMME:



For more information contact PC+ coordinators  
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