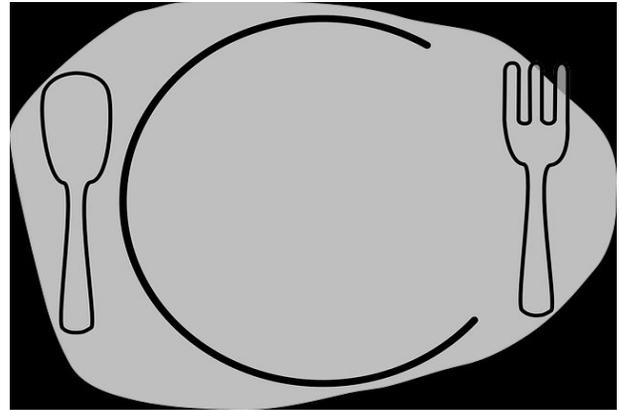


# When to Introduce Solids to Your Baby

Recommendations from the [\*American Academy of Pediatrics\*](#) and [\*Baby Led Weaning\*](#)



## Overview

Some of the most commonly asked questions I receive from parents are about food - "When should I introduce solids to my child?" "What should I start with?" "How long should I breastfeed my child?" "How do I transition my child to cow's milk and when is the best time to start?" I tell my patients that while there is no *one way* to take these next steps, there are some guidelines that can help you navigate this exciting time. Here in this guide are recommendations from two schools of thought when it comes to feeding your baby: The American Academy of Pediatrics and Baby Led Weaning.

Remember, while you are being bombarded with suggestions from family members, friends and multiple online sources, the person that knows best is your baby because every child is unique in their development as well as their experiences with food.

## Baby Led Weaning

Baby Led Weaning focuses on introducing healthy, nutrient dense foods first. Examples would be to introduce small, soft pieces of avocado, banana, or sweet potato. This model encourages parents to feed their child whatever the rest of the family is eating at the dinner table - no purees, no mush. Just hand your baby food in a soft, suitably sized piece. Baby led weaning usually starts around 6 months just as the AAP suggests. The main difference between BLW and traditional weaning is the order in which babies learn to eat. With purees, babies learn to swallow first and then chew. With BLW, babies learn to chew first and then swallowing comes sometime after. This model of feeding lets you allow your baby to do what they need to do while they learn.

## The American Academy of Pediatrics

The AAP recommends introducing solids no earlier than 4-6 months. This is because babies are not physically ready to digest solids before that. It is generally recognized that breast milk provides all the necessary nutrition required for normal growth and development which is why the AAP recommends breastfeeding ideally, at least until a year. Here are some reasons why:

1. Human milk contains more easily digested proteins.
2. There is less saturated fat in human milk
3. The antibodies in breast milk help the child fight disease
4. Breastfeeding promotes bonding between mother and child.

Once your child reaches the ages of 4-6 months and you're starting to think about introducing solids, here are some signs of readiness to look for:

1. Can your baby hold their head up?
2. Does your baby open their mouth when food comes their way or shows signs of interest?
3. Can they move food from the spoon to the back of their throat? Watch for the disappearance of the tongue thrust reflex. If still present, your baby is not ready.
4. Are they big enough? Usually by this time your baby is about twice their birth weight (13+ lbs).

Introducing solids is more a matter of gaining experience with eating techniques - trying different flavors and textures rather than sustenance. Therefore, you should continue breast milk or formula while introducing solids.

## Q&A and Tips

### How long should I wait between introducing new foods?

I advise parents to wait at least 3 days between each new food introduced. This will allow us to identify which food may have caused a new rash or allergic reaction.

### When should I start transitioning my child to cow's milk?

I encourage parents to hold on switching completely from breast milk/formula to cow's milk until at least 12 months old. Cow's milk does not have iron in it - therefore, building your child's iron stores through breast milk or fortified formula is the best way to prevent iron deficiency. However, this does not mean you cannot give your child dairy products such as cheeses and yogurt prior to a year of age. These foods have great nutritional value so giving them to your child whenever he or she is ready is encouraged.

