



When to Introduce Solids

Many agree that **17 weeks of age (4 months)** should be the earliest that weaning begins (including the Department of Health in the UK)

It is **safer** for your baby to wait until after 17 weeks, as there is less chance of them picking up an infection from food, or having a bad reaction to food, as their immune system is strong.

Objectives of weaning: prevent food allergies and ensure babies are exposed to a wide range of healthy foods.

Key Signs Your Baby Is Ready For Solids

Generally there are 3 signs that you can look out for

1. S/he can sit upright when supported and hold his head up. This is important to ensure s/he can swallow food.
2. S/he has good hand-eye coordination so can look at food, pick it up and put it in his/her mouth.
3. S/he can swallow food. If your baby is not ready s/he will use his/her tongue to push the food back out of his/her mouth

If your baby is showing the above signs, and more than 17 weeks old, then s/he is probably ready to start solids



Vegetable first weaning

This is one approach for how to start weaning.

It applies whether you are spoon-feeding or doing baby led weaning.

Start offering **vegetables** rather than carbohydrates such as baby rice or sweet fruits such as apple puree

- Introduce one vegetable at a time. This will help your baby get to know what each separate vegetable looks like, smells like, tastes like, and feels like (texture).
- Try to choose **less sweet vegetables** (such as avocado, courgette, asparagus, broccoli) over sweet ones initially.
- **Variety**: Offer a different vegetable on different days.
- **Repetition**: Reoffer the same vegetable again
- **Perseverance** is key. Try not to focus on your baby's facial expressions.
- Be sure to start solids for the first time when your baby is healthy, with no colds or viruses, or recent vaccinations.
- Start with once a day, earlier in the day such as lunchtime.
- Slowly increase to 2 times a day, then 3 meals of solids per day.

Sources include:

Strong4Life (Children's Healthcare of Atlanta): Is Your Baby Ready for Solids?

Barends, et al. (2014) Effects of starting weaning exclusively with vegetables on vegetable intake at the age of 12 and 23 months.