

# Baby-Led Weaning

**At around 6 months of age, most babies are ready to start solid food. Their bodies contains enzymes needed for digestion. The tongue-thrust reflex is gone. Babies can learn to chew and swallow.**

Traditionally, parents begin solids by giving their baby cereal and pureed foods with a spoon. However, some parents are taking a new approach called baby-led weaning (BLW). Instead of feeding the baby with a spoon, the baby feeds herself soft finger foods.

With spoon feeding, parents control how much and how fast their baby eats. Spoon feeding is faster than allowing baby to eat at his own pace. Even though their baby feels full, parents often encourage him to *take one or two more bites*.

BLW gives baby some control when eating. Parents serve their baby *soft, nutritious* foods that are easy to pick up and eat. However, she controls how much and how fast she eats.

Learning hunger cues — feeling hungry and full — is important. With BLW, when a baby feels full, he stops eating. This teaches him to self-regulate and not overeat.

With BLW, your baby will also:

- Eat a wider variety of food. He eats the *soft* foods that the rest of the family is eating.
- Adjust to food with different textures.
- Practice manual dexterity skills.
- Learn hand-eye coordination movements.

Consult your doctor to make sure your baby is ready for BLW. If you want to give it a try:

- *Continue to breast or bottle feed your baby until he is around 12 months of age.* He will get most of his calories and nutrients from these feedings.
- Feed baby during family meal times.
- Secure baby in a high chair – sitting up.
- Plan for a mess. Food will be all over your baby and the floor.
- Cut *soft* food into small strips. Food should be firm enough to hold but soft enough to mash with a finger and chew.
- *Avoid foods that pose a choking risk.*

- Introduce new foods one at a time.
- Place small amounts of food on baby's tray.

***Never leave your baby alone while feeding.***

BLW may not work for every parent. Many parents combine BLW and spoon feeding. Choose what works for you and your baby.



**For more information on baby-led weaning and foods to avoid, go to:**

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby/features/baby-led-weaning-food#1>

[https://www.babycenter.com/0\\_baby-led-weaning-an-alternative-approach-to-starting-your-ba\\_10419206.bc](https://www.babycenter.com/0_baby-led-weaning-an-alternative-approach-to-starting-your-ba_10419206.bc)

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