

Baby Led Weaning (BLW)

Baby-Led Weaning is a method of introducing solids that skips the use of infant cereals and purees and focuses on letting baby feed themselves right from the beginning. By waiting until their baby is developmentally ready (around 6mo) they are able to introduce table foods directly from the family meal.

Tips for Successful Baby-Led Weaning (modified from parents.com)

Wait until your baby is ready. Most healthy children over 6 months of age are developmentally able to self-feed; however, strong chewing skills in some children may not be fully developed until 9 months. If your baby was premature then the adjusted age must be used (6 months from expected date of delivery). Your child's paediatrician or family physician should be consulted before introducing BLW if there are any concerns about the child's development – particularly if there are any sucking, swallowing or breathing difficulties.

Continue breastfeeding and formula. As solid food intake increases baby will naturally take less milk but this is a slow and gradual process.

Pull up a chair. You're not off the hook for fully engaging at mealtime: Continue to socialize with—and supervise—your child.

Start with soft first foods. Ripe fruits, cooked egg yolks, flaky fish, moist and shredded meats, puffed cereals, and cooked pastas and vegetables are all good options.

Prep those foods for easy grasping. Substantial-size pieces—cut in long, thin strips, coin-shaped, or with a crinkle cutter—are easiest for your baby to manage.

Prepare for messes. The goal of baby-led weaning is to let your little one explore food at his own pace, so that means smashing it, smearing it, dropping it, and probably making a big old mess at nearly every meal. Your floor will likely see the worst of it. You can place a garbage bag or a plastic tablecloth under the high chair for easy cleanup, replace your baby's bib with an art smock, and balance messy foods with less-messy ones (like dry cereal or toast) when feeding.

Dine together. Give your baby some of the same ingredients that make up your dish.

Join an online support group (see below)

What Not to Do for Baby-Led Weaning

Choose a bad time for meals. A tired or upset baby likely won't cooperate.

Expect it to work for every baby.

Enter panic mode. Most babies are surprisingly adept at managing finger foods, but gagging is very common in the early days of eating.

Rush your baby. Plan for 10-to-15-minute meals—at the minimum, says Harrison.

Get lax on safety. Stay away from choking hazards such as grapes, hot dogs, raisins, popcorn, raw vegetables, and sticky nut butters. As a precaution, always stay with your baby during mealtimes and make sure baby is sitting up.

Ignore your baby's signals. If food is getting tossed in every direction, your baby has likely had enough.

Get overly heated or emotional. Eating should be treated as a natural and expected part of the day. Don't praise, pressure, or scold about eating.

Rely on sharp utensils or hot foods. Let your baby start handling a kid-safe fork and spoon, but don't expect much food to make it onto the utensil or into her mouth. Avoid toothpicks or other skewers. Meals should be barely warm or cool. Always check the temp before serving.

Give up. Some babies prefer purées at first, are slow to learn how to self-feed, or need multiple exposures to certain foods.

Other resources:

Websites:

- <http://www.babyledweaning.com/>
- <https://www.sarahremmer.com>
- <https://www.mamanatural.com>
- <https://www.babycenter.ca>

Facebook groups:

- Baby Led Weaning And Combo Feeding Without The Woo (preferred)
- Baby Led Weaning Canada
- Baby Led Weaning for Beginners & Beyond (BLWBB)

Note: Some support groups are quite rigid – find a group that you feel comfortable with.

Choking Hazards for 6 to 12 Month Olds (from

<https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/InfantandToddlerNutrition/foods-and-drinks/choking-hazards.html>

UNSAFE FOODS - CHOKING HAZARD (6-12 mo)			
Fruits/Vegetables	Proteins	Grain Products	Sweetened Foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked or raw whole corn kernels • Uncut cherry or grape tomatoes • Pieces of hard raw fruit or vegetables • Whole pieces of canned fruit • Uncut grapes, berries, cherries, or melon balls • Uncooked dry fruit such as raisins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole or chopped nuts and nut butters such as peanut butter • Tough or large chunks of meat • Hot dogs, meat sticks, or sausages • Fish with bones • Large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookies or granola bars • Potato or corn chips, pretzels, or similar snack foods • Crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole grain kernels • Whole kernels of cooked rice, barley, wheat, or other grains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard candy, jelly beans, caramels, gum drops, or gummy candies • Chewing gum • Marshmallows