

# How to Start Solids with **BLW**



**A practical guide for parents, caregivers  
and healthcare professionals.**

Developed by



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Hello!

This guide was created by a multidisciplinary team of pediatricians, registered dietitians, speech-language pathologists, a feeding therapist & behavior analyst who specialize in infant feeding. We're part of BLW Meals, a baby-led weaning app with over 4 million downloads worldwide.

Starting solids is an exciting milestone, but it can also bring a lot of questions:

*"Will my baby eat enough?"*

*"What if they choke?"*

*"How do I even begin?"*

If you've asked yourself any of these, you're not alone.

We created this e-book to give families clear, simple guidance and peace of mind. It's also designed to support pediatricians, dietitians, and other healthcare professionals who work with families.

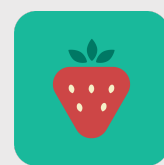
Inside, you'll find a straightforward, step-by-step approach based on current recommendations from leading health authorities in the United States and Canada. In both countries, experts recommend introducing solid foods around 6 months of age, when babies show signs of developmental readiness, while still continuing breast milk or formula.

Our goal is to help you feel confident, informed, and supported as you begin this new stage.

Let's make starting solids a safe, positive, and nourishing experience for you and your baby.

-The BLW Meals Team

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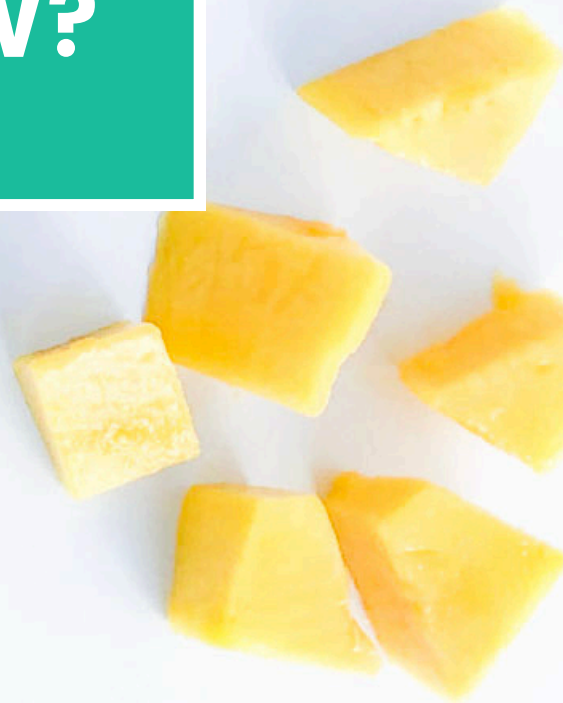
BLWMeals





CHAPTER 1

# What is BLW?



# What is Baby-Led Weaning?

BLW stands for Baby-Led Weaning and was coined by Gill Rapley. In this approach, babies have a more active role in mealtime and are given the opportunity to feed themselves from the very beginning of their solid food journey.

Instead of only being spoon-fed purées by adults, **babies explore appropriately prepared foods at their own pace**, according to their developmental readiness.



## How does it work?

Babies are offered appropriately-prepared foods and **encouraged to explore them using their hands and**, in some cases, pre-loaded utensils.

Traditional Feeding	Baby-Led Weaning
Spoon-fed by adults	Self-feeding
Purées only	Variety of textures
Passive role	Active exploration

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# Understanding BLW

It's also important to clarify that in North America, the word "weaning" does not mean stopping breast milk or formula. In this context, it simply refers to the process of adding solid foods alongside milk feeds.

**BLW is rooted in responsive feeding principles** supported by organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics and World Health Organization. This means **parents decide what, when, and where food is offered, while the baby decides if and how much to eat**, aligning with Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility.

While BLW is often associated with finger foods, it is not about avoiding purées. Purées can be included in BLW and support baby's self-feeding (e.g., pre-loaded spoons or using hands). Many families use a flexible mix of both purées and safe finger foods, allowing the baby to lead the feeding experience.

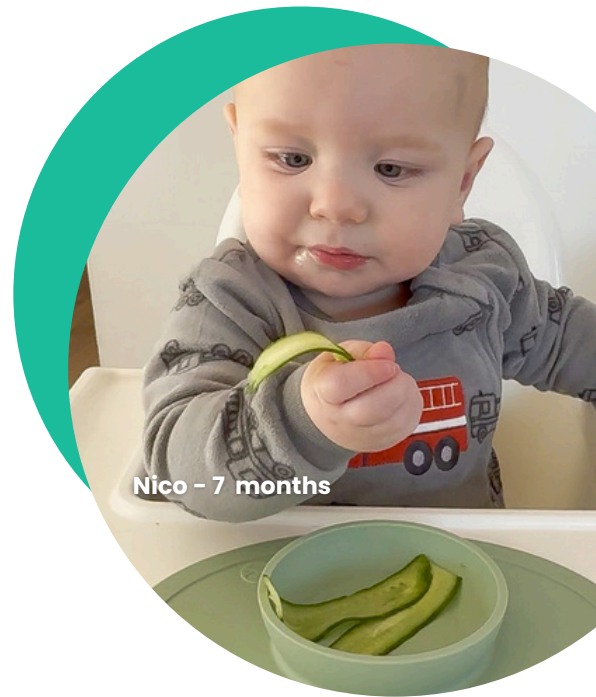
## Why choose BLW?



There are many benefits we will dive into such as supporting autonomy, self-regulation, and oral motor development.

**Babies should always be supervised by an adult during meals, and foods should be prepared in ways that reduce choking risk.**

# How BLW Supports Your Baby's Development:



## Building skills from the start

- 1 Encourages independence:** Babies have the chance to feed themselves and build confidence at mealtimes.
- 2 Supports appetite regulation:** Because babies decide how much to eat, they learn to recognize their own hunger and fullness cues.  
Research shows that responsive feeding (letting babies guide how much they eat) is linked with healthier self-regulation and better long-term eating behaviors.
- 3 Builds motor skills and coordination:** grasping food, bringing it to the mouth, chewing, and swallowing all help strengthen fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- 4 Enhances sensory development:** babies explore different textures, temperatures, smells, flavors, and colors. Research shows that sensory exposure during early feeding supports texture acceptance and eating skills.

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# BLW is More Than Just Eating



Iria - 6 months

- 1 May support broader food acceptance:** Early and repeated exposure to a variety of foods can help expand acceptance over time.
- 2 Encourages a positive relationship with food:** Mealtimes focus on connection and exploration rather than pressure to eat.
- 3 Promotes family meals:** Babies eat the same meal as the rest of the family (prepared safely), encouraging social interaction, modeling, and shared routines. Research shows that eating together as a family is associated with more positive mealtime behaviors and food acceptance.
- 4 Can simplify mealtime for parents:** Instead of preparing separate purées, families can adapt regular meals to be safe and appropriate for babies.
- 5 May reduce mealtime stress:** When babies are allowed to explore food at their own pace, mealtimes often feel more relaxed & enjoyable.
- 6 Encourages curiosity and imitation:** Babies are naturally motivated to try foods when they see others eating them.

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# Responsive Feeding



Baby-led spoon feeds can occur through responsive feeding. The baby is not simply there to receive food. They reach for the spoon, explore with their hands, show interest, turn away when full, taste, and gradually learn how to eat at their own pace. This allows the baby to take an active role in the meal while the caregiver pays attention to the baby's hunger and fullness cues (AAP, 2022; Health Canada & CPS, 2025).

## Practical Tips:

- 1** Offering food and feeding a child are two different things. If your baby doesn't want to eat, avoid insisting on "just one bite." What matters most is that they feel interested and comfortable. Forcing the spoon can interfere with learning hunger and fullness cues (AAP, 2022; Health Canada & CPS, 2025).
- 2** Don't always mix everything together. Serve foods separately so your baby can recognize different flavors, colors, textures, and smells.
- 3** Let your baby explore food with their hands. Touch is essential at this stage. Even when using a spoon, they should be allowed to touch the food themselves (CDC, 2023).
- 4** Progress textures gradually, if you prefer to start with purées and mashed foods, aim for soft, safely prepared pieces by around 9 months (Health Canada & CPS, 2025).
- 5** It's okay for feeding to look different in different places. Your baby may eat with their hands at home and use a spoon at daycare or a grandparent's house, as long as mealtimes are comfortable and pressure-free (AAP, 2022).
- 6** Consider using 2-3 spoons: one for offering food and one for your baby to hold. This supports participation and reduces frustration.

**Starting solids is about more than offering food, it's a time for your baby to build skills, learn routines, and develop a positive relationship with eating. Take it one step at a time, trust the process, and recognize progress in the small everyday moments.**

# When to Start




The World Health Organization (WHO) and major pediatric authorities recommend exclusive breastfeeding or infant formula for the first 6 months of life before introducing other foods or liquids (WHO, 2023; AAP, 2022). During this time, **babies get all the nutrients they need from solely breast milk or formula**. For preterm infants, the corrected age is considered when evaluating readiness for starting solids.


To know when a baby can safely start solids foods, we look for signs of readiness, behaviors and developmental cues that show the infant is ready to handle new textures and tastes alongside milk feeds (WHO, 2023).

## Signs Your Baby is Ready for Solid Foods:

- ✓ **Around 6 months of age:** Baby should be close to 6 months (corrected age for preterm infants).
- ✓ **Good head and neck control:** Baby can hold their head steady and upright.
- ✓ **Able to sit upright:** Baby can sit upright with little or no support.
- ✓ **Brings objects to mouth:** Baby can grasp and mouth items independently.
- ✓ **Interested in food and eating:** They watch you at meals, may reach for food and mimic you.



**Regardless of the feeding method you choose (finger foods, purées or a combination), these signs indicate that your baby is likely developmentally ready to begin exploring solid foods.**

A close-up photograph of a baby with curly hair sitting in a white high chair. The baby is wearing a pink top with a ladybug pattern and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In front of the baby is a bright green plate with two compartments, each containing three golden-brown potato wedges. A person's hand is visible at the bottom left corner, holding the plate. The background shows a tiled floor and a patterned curtain.

CHAPTER 2

# What to Know Before Starting

Scarlett - 6 months

# What to know before starting

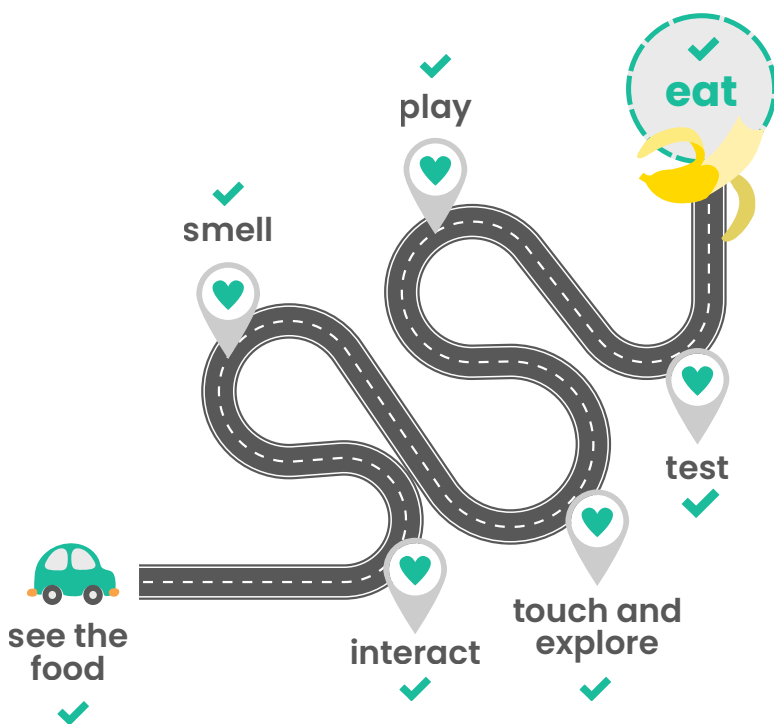
Starting solids requires patience, knowledge, and confidence. Here are **5 essential tips** to help make this new stage smoother for both you and your baby.



Scarlett - 7 months

## 1 Have realistic expectations and respect your baby's pace.

Learning to eat takes time. In the beginning, babies usually explore more than they actually eat. They're still learning how food works, and breast milk or formula remains their main source of nutrition during the first year. Every baby has their own timing and energy needs, including how much milk and solid food they consume. Try not to compare your baby's intake to that of other babies and follow their cues.



View mealtime as an opportunity to expose your baby to food; a time to explore, learn, and build skills. When feeding is responsive and pressure-free, independence develops naturally over time.

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## 2 The goal of introducing solid foods is not just for your baby to eat.

It's for them to explore foods, develop motor skills, broaden their palate, and learn how to feed themselves.

## 3 Division of responsibility

It is up to you to decide **what, when, and where** your baby will eat. Your baby, in turn, decides **how much and what** to eat from their plate.



before



after

## 4 Breast milk or infant formula remains the primary food until one year of age.

Solid food is only complementary during this stage.

## 5 Don't put so much pressure on yourself.

This process can be challenging, and it's okay if things don't always go as planned. Some babies pick up on it quickly and others need more time. Appreciate your efforts, ask for help when you need it, and remember: you're already doing your best.

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# Signs of satiety

Forcing a baby to eat can compromise their **natural sense of self-regulation of satiety**. Being disconnected from their own satiety can set a long-term precedent for unhealthy eating habits and put them at risk for weight and health concerns.

Pay attention to the **signs** your baby may show when they want to **stop** eating:

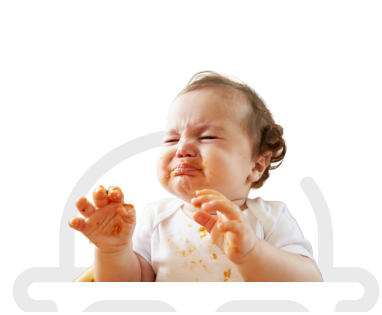
- Expressing "no" by closing their mouth;
- Make a "windshield wiper" motion with their hands;
- Throwing food on the floor.



**Turning their face away**



**Pushing the food**



**Angry and crying**



**Closing lips and looking the other way**



**Throwing food on the floor.**



**Distracted and playing**

If you notice any of these signs, don't force or distract them to get them to eat more. Trust and respect your baby's appetite.

**End the meal and try again later!**

# Milestones in Introducing Solid Foods

Introducing solid foods is a phase that lasts from **6 months to 2 years of age** and goes through several stages until eating habits are established. Here's a summary of what to expect:

 **5 months**

**Prepare for starting solid foods** and encourage your baby's readiness skills.

 **6 months**

When your baby shows all the signs of readiness, **begin offering food**;

 **9 months**

Baby is already using the **pincer grasp**, able to pick up smaller pieces and push the food to the sides of their mouth, making chewing easier;

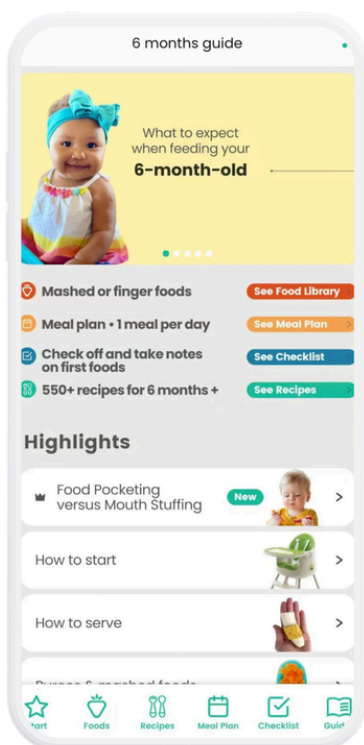


 **12 months**

Baby should be **eating the same meals as the rest of the family**. Introduce salt in small quantities;

 **18 months**

**Food refusal** may start to occur or has already begun.



Each month brings new discoveries. Families benefit from understanding what to expect at each stage and how feeding can be adjusted to support their baby's development.

To understand each step in more detail, **access BLW Meals App's free Feeding Guides for each age.**

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A white ceramic plate with four sections is shown from a top-down perspective. An orange baby spoon with a textured head and a ring handle is placed in the top-left section. The plate is set against a light, neutral background.

CHAPTER 3

**What Do I Need  
to Start?**

# What tools do I need to start?

Accessories can be very helpful in introducing solid foods, but they are not essential. Baby-Led Weaning doesn't depend on specific items. What matters is offering food safely and responsively. Use what you have on hand and adapt it to your needs.



## High chair

High chair or portable baby chair

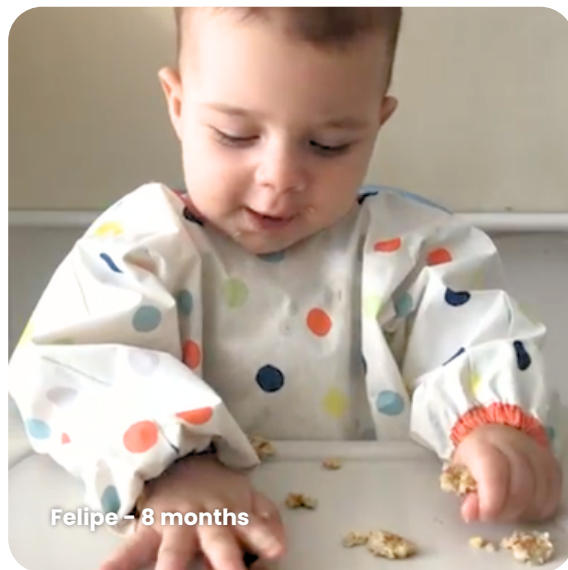
### What to consider:

- Removable tray (makes it easier to use and clean)
- Washable materials, such as plastic (easy to clean), avoid fabrics.
- Adjustable footrest (ideal for the child's comfort and posture)
- A high, supportive back that does not lean
- Straps for safety
- Available space at home (the highchair takes up more space)
- How often you eat out (a portable chair may be more convenient)



### **Pocket Bib**

Easy to clean with a pocket to prevent food waste. It doesn't need to be silicone! There are plenty of waterproof fabric-based ones



### **Long-sleeved bib**

It's less practical, but it protects the entire outfit.



### **Avoid cloth bibs**

Clothes may still get wet and they don't catch spilled food.



### Training spoon

Designed for easy handling by small hands, ideal for serving soft, pureed foods.



### Forks and shallow spoons

Shallow spoons are optimal dimensions and depth for an infant's mouth.



### Small plate with a suction

These help the plate stay on the tray and avoid plate-flipping and throwing. You can also place the food directly on their tray.



### Open Cup

For day-to-day use, try using a small cup (about the size of a shot glass) it can be silicone, stainless steel, plastic or glass. Try to only use spill-proof cups like sippy or straw cups for outings.



CHAPTER 4

# How to Start

Felipe - 6 months

# How to get started

The basics you need to know to start solids with confidence:

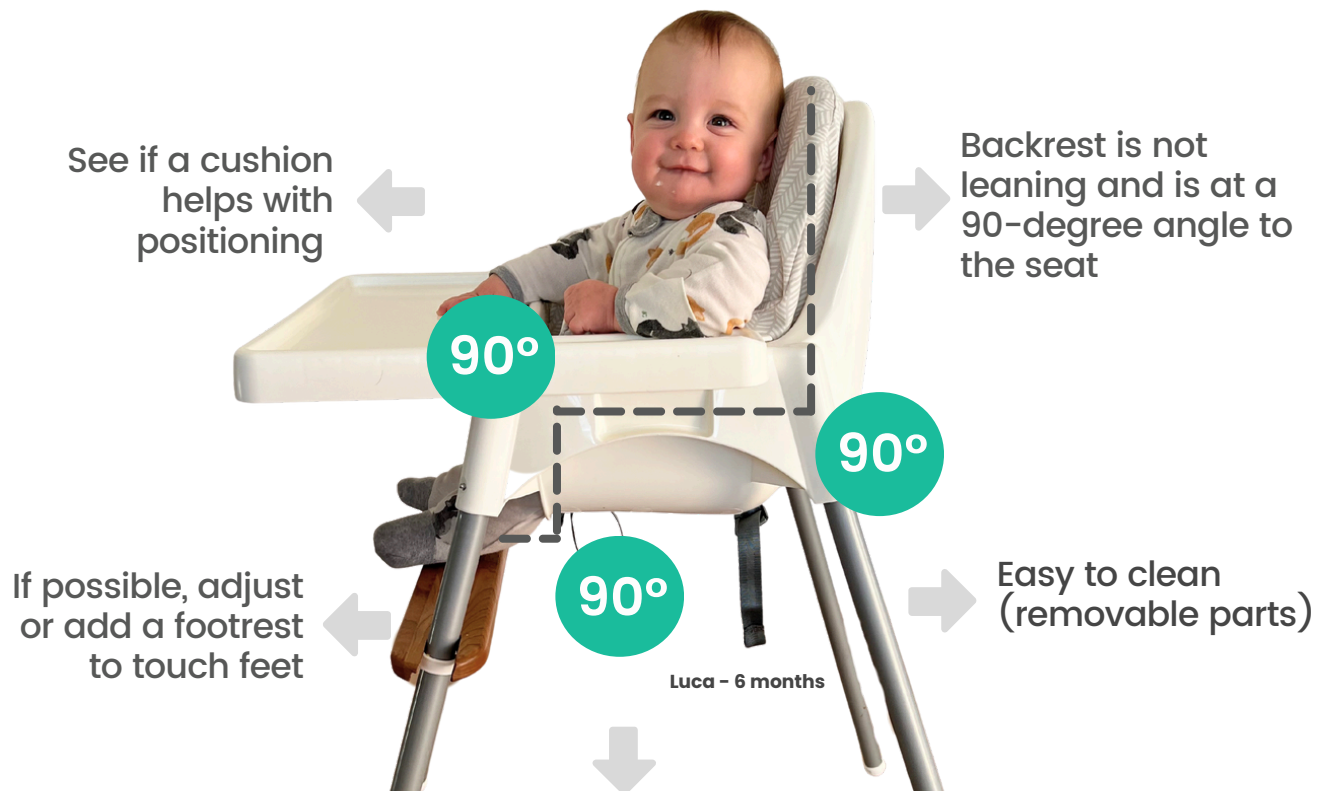
## 1 Model eating for your baby

Babies learn by imitation. For them, eating with others is much more valuable than having to figure out what to do on their own, so eat with your baby whenever possible.



## 2 Position your baby safely

Never offer food to your baby while they are lying down or semi-reclined as this can increase the chance of choking. It's important that they are sitting upright, with their back and feet supported, preferably in a high chair.



Chairs that promote a 90-degree angle at the joints (hips, knees, and ankles) provide an ideal position for eating.

### 3 Meet baby's needs before the meal

A hungry baby wants milk, not food! After all, they don't yet know that food also satisfies hunger. Before feeding them, offer breast milk or infant formula as you normally would.

#### Your baby should be:



Also, make sure you can be fully present while your baby is eating, minimizing any distractions around you.

### 4 Prepare the food safely

Offer food in shapes that your baby can pick up with their palmar grasp. Food should be soft enough to easily squish between your fingers.

## 5 Start with just one piece at a time

When offering food, start with one piece at a time. If your baby seems interested, offer more. This helps your baby stay focused, reduces waste, and minimizes mess.

## 6 Avoid salt, but season with herbs and spices

Salt is not recommended until 1 year of age; however, all natural seasonings are allowed from 6+ months. Try different flavor combinations to broaden your baby's palate:



Rosemary



Garlic



Leeks



Cinnamon



Onion



Chives



Coriander



Cloves



Curry



Fennel



Mint



Laurel



Basil



Marjoram



Oregano



Paprika



Peppers



Celery



Sage



Thyme



To find more different spice combinations, refer to the Free Food Library in **BLW Meals App** and search for the food you're offering.

## 7 No added sugars

Avoid added sugars (e.g. white sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup) until the age of 2. Your baby can enjoy the natural sweet taste of fruits.

## 8 Do not offer juice

Juice (even 100% natural fruit juice) should only be offered after the age of 1. After your baby turns 1, offer no more than 4 oz (120 mL) of juice per day.

## 9 Offer water throughout the day

From the first day your baby begins solid foods, you can start offering small amounts of water throughout the day, including at mealtimes.

At first, they may drink very little, as breast milk or formula continues to provide most of their hydration.

If they aren't very interested in water yet, that's completely normal. Simply continue offering opportunities to drink. As their intake of solid foods increases, their need for water will gradually increase as well.



### Tip

Whenever you drink water,  
offer some to your baby.




Keep their cup in plain sight  
and offer it during meals.



In time, they will learn to:

Show you  
when they  
are thirsty



CHAPTER 5

# Gag Reflex and Choking

Iria - 6 months

# Gag reflex and choking



It's important to know that offering finger foods in appropriate sizes and textures is just as safe as offering mashed foods or purées and does not increase the risk of choking. **Choking is rare but serious, so caregivers should be prepared to respond in case it happens.**

Some foods should be avoided or altered to ensure they are safe for your baby.

## Foods with a high choking risk



Firm, round foods (grapes and cherry tomatoes)



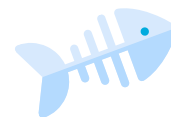
Hard fruits and veggies



Leafy greens



Tough pieces of meat



Bony fish



Popcorn



Whole nuts, large seeds and nut butters can be a **choking risk**.



Small toys or objects that can fit completely inside a toilet paper roll (about 1.25 inches wide) can pose a serious choking hazard.

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# How to avoid choking

- 1 Make sure your baby is showing the **signs of readiness** for starting solids.
- 2 Always offer food in a **safe size and texture**:



*Refer to BLW Meals App's free food library*

- 3 Baby should always be **seated upright** in an appropriate feeding chair.
- 4 **Do not offer food** while your baby is in a stroller, reclining seat, walker, or swing.
- 5 **Always supervise your baby while they are eating.**

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# Gagging vs. choking

All babies are born with a gag reflex: a **natural protective response** that helps prevent choking. It can look and sound alarming, but gagging is a normal part of learning to eat. This reflex helps babies manage food in their mouths and move it safely before swallowing. It's important to **understand the difference** between gagging and choking:

	 <b>Gagging</b>	 <b>Choking</b>
<b>Sound</b>	Noisy: coughing, sputtering, or retching sounds	Silent or very quiet, little or no sound
<b>Breathing</b>	Baby is breathing	Baby cannot breathe or has severe difficulty breathing
<b>Airway</b>	Airway is open and protected by the gag reflex	Airway is partially or completely blocked
<b>Face color</b>	May turn red or watery-eyed	May turn pale or bluish (especially lips or face)
		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✔ Stay calm</li><li>✔ Model spitting out the food for them to imitate</li><li>✘ Do not stick your finger in baby's mouth</li><li>✘ Avoid sudden rough movements</li><li>⚠ If a gag lasts for over 15 seconds, perform a choking maneuver</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✔ Perform a choking maneuver immediately</li><li>✔ Have someone call an emergency service</li></ul> <p> <b>911</b>   <i>This number may be different in other countries.</i></p>

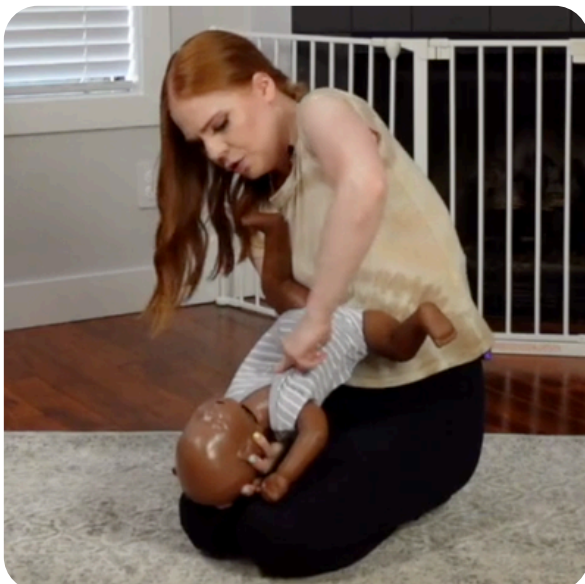
# Choking Maneuver for babies under 1 year

## 1 Give 5 forceful blows to their back



- Lay the infant face-down on your forearms, point their head downwards.
- Use the palm of your hand to give 5 forceful blows between their shoulder blades

## 2 Give 5 quick chest thrusts



- Lay the infant face-up on your lap
- Using 2 fingers, give 5 quick chest thrusts to the middle of their breastbone, below the nipples. *\*Note different countries may recommend using the palm of the hand. Both can still be effective*

 **Repeat 1 or 2 until object is dislodged**

# Choking Maneuver for Babies above 1, Children and Adults

## 1 Perform abdominal thrusts



- Stand behind the child and wrap your hands around their waist
- Make a fist with one hand, thumb side in
- Place the fist below the chest, slightly above the navel
- Placing the other hand over the fist, press into the abdomen with a quick, upward push
- Perform 5 abdominal thrusts until the food or object comes out

 **Repeat until object is dislodged**

Keep in mind that choking risks also exist while handling liquids, purees, or toys. This is why it is important that every person who deals with babies knows how to perform this maneuver.

A photograph of a banana with a yellow sticker, several banana slices, and banana peels scattered on a white surface. The banana is positioned in the upper left, with its sticker facing the viewer. The slices are arranged in a semi-circle on the right side. The peels are scattered on the left side. The background is a plain white surface.

CHAPTER 6

# How To Offer Food

# How to offer banana



Bananas are one of the most versatile foods for introducing solids. Besides being sweet and soft, they can be offered whole, mashed, or in spears.

Because bananas are naturally soft, they are generally easy for babies to manage when offered in appropriate sizes. In the beginning it can be helpful to keep part of the peel on to make it easier to grasp since bananas are so slippery.

Bananas are a source of fiber, vitamins B6 and C, and potassium, and great for gut health: riper bananas may help soften stools, while less ripe bananas contain more resistant starch and may lead to firmer stools in some children.

Although the risk is low, bananas have occasionally been associated with allergic reactions in people with latex or certain pollen allergies.

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# How to serve banana

**6-8 months**



Bananas are soft, but can be slippery. Leave a portion of the peel on to make it easier to grasp.



Another option is to poke your finger through the center of the banana dividing it into 3 strips.

**with a spoon**



You can mash it and offer it on a spoon.

**9 months**



Once the baby has developed the pincer grasp, cut it into bite-sized pieces.

# How to offer carrots



Carrots are a nutritious vegetable to include as baby begins exploring solids. They are particularly rich in beta-carotene (a precursor to vitamin A), and also provide vitamin C, potassium, fiber, and other vitamins and minerals that support healthy growth and immune function.

Because carrots are naturally hard, they should always be cooked until very soft before offering to babies. A good guide is that the cooked carrot should be soft enough to mash easily between your fingers with light pressure.

Once cooked, carrots can be offered in soft pieces or spears, mashed, grated, or incorporated into other preparations.

Carrots may also affect digestion. Cooked carrots can sometimes contribute to firmer stools, while raw carrots contain more fiber and may have a mild laxative effect.

**Important:** Raw carrots are a significant choking hazard. They should not be offered to children under 4 years of age unless they are finely grated or prepared in another safe texture.

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# How to serve carrots

**6-8 months**



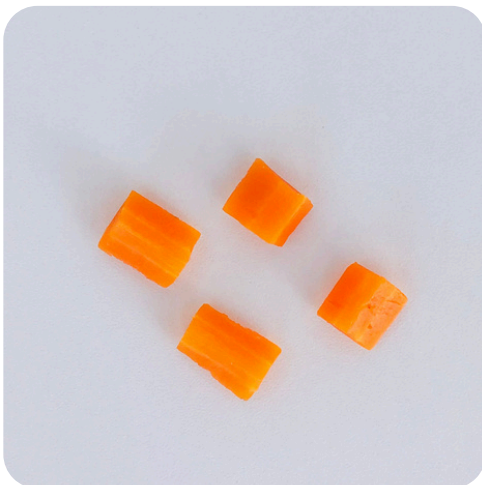
This hard veggie needs to be cooked until tender. Offer it in stick-shaped pieces to make it easier to pick up.

**with a spoon**



Cooked carrot can be mashed and offered with a spoon.

**9 months**



Once your baby has developed the pincer grasp, cut cooked carrot into small cubes.



You can also offer it grated using a medium grater.

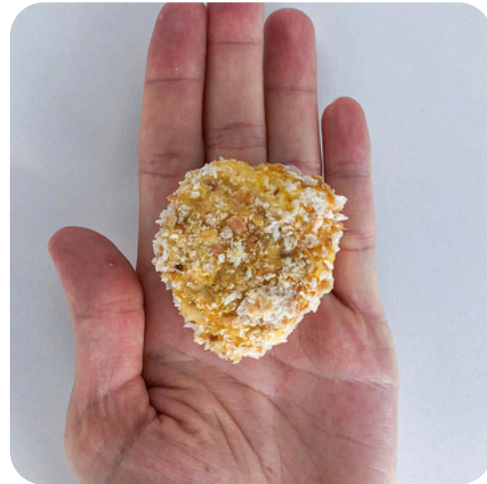


# How to serve fish

**6-8 months**



Choose fillets with few bones, remove them thoroughly, and cut into strips about two-fingers wide.



Prepare fish cakes or fish patties (look for recipes in BLW Meals app)

**with a spoon**



Cooked fish can be mashed and offered on a spoon.

**9 months**



Offer fish in smaller bite-sized pieces or shredded, once baby develops the pincer grasp.

# How to offer beans



Beans are a nutritious legume that can be offered once baby starts solids.

They provide plant-based protein, fiber, and important minerals such as iron, zinc, magnesium, potassium, and phosphorus, which support healthy growth and digestion. Because plant-based iron is absorbed more easily when paired with vitamin C, serving beans with foods like tomatoes, peppers, or citrus can help improve iron absorption.

Some babies may experience gas or intestinal discomfort from beans. To help improve digestibility, rinse canned beans thoroughly with fresh water, for dry beans, soak for 8–12 hours then cook in fresh water until very soft.

Beans should always be offered tender and in shapes that are appropriate for your baby's stage. In the beginning, offer mashed, pureed, or in soft patties. Once your baby has their pincer grasp, soft beans can be offered whole.

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# How to serve beans

**6-8 months**



Form beans into balls or fritters so it's easy for baby to hold and self-feed

**with a spoon**



Mash soft beans and offer on a spoon

**9 months**



Offer tender beans whole for baby to pick up with their pincer grasp.



Picking up small smashed beans is a good way to practice fine motor skills.

# Summary of safe ways to cut and offer foods

Between 6–8 months

## Fruits

Banana



Avocado



Watermelon



Kiwi



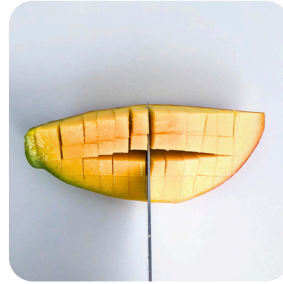
Strawberry



Orange



Mango



Grapes



## Roots & Veggies

Broccoli



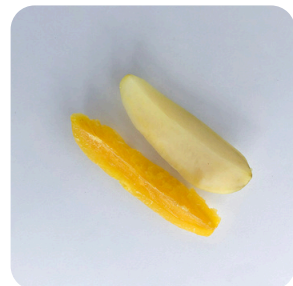
Pumpkin



Zucchini



Potatoes



## Meat & Eggs

Beef



Fish



Chicken



Egg



*\*Make sure meats are very tender! Serve with a sauce as needed.*

## Grains & Legumes

Rice



Corn



Pasta



Oats



Beans



Chickpeas



Peas



Peanut



## Leafy Greens

Lettuce



Spinach



Kale



Cabbage



## Nuts, seeds & dried fruits

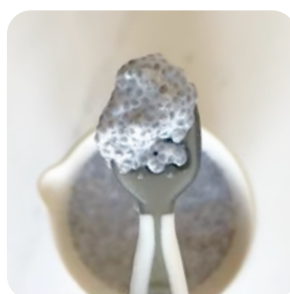
Tree Nuts



Flax Seeds



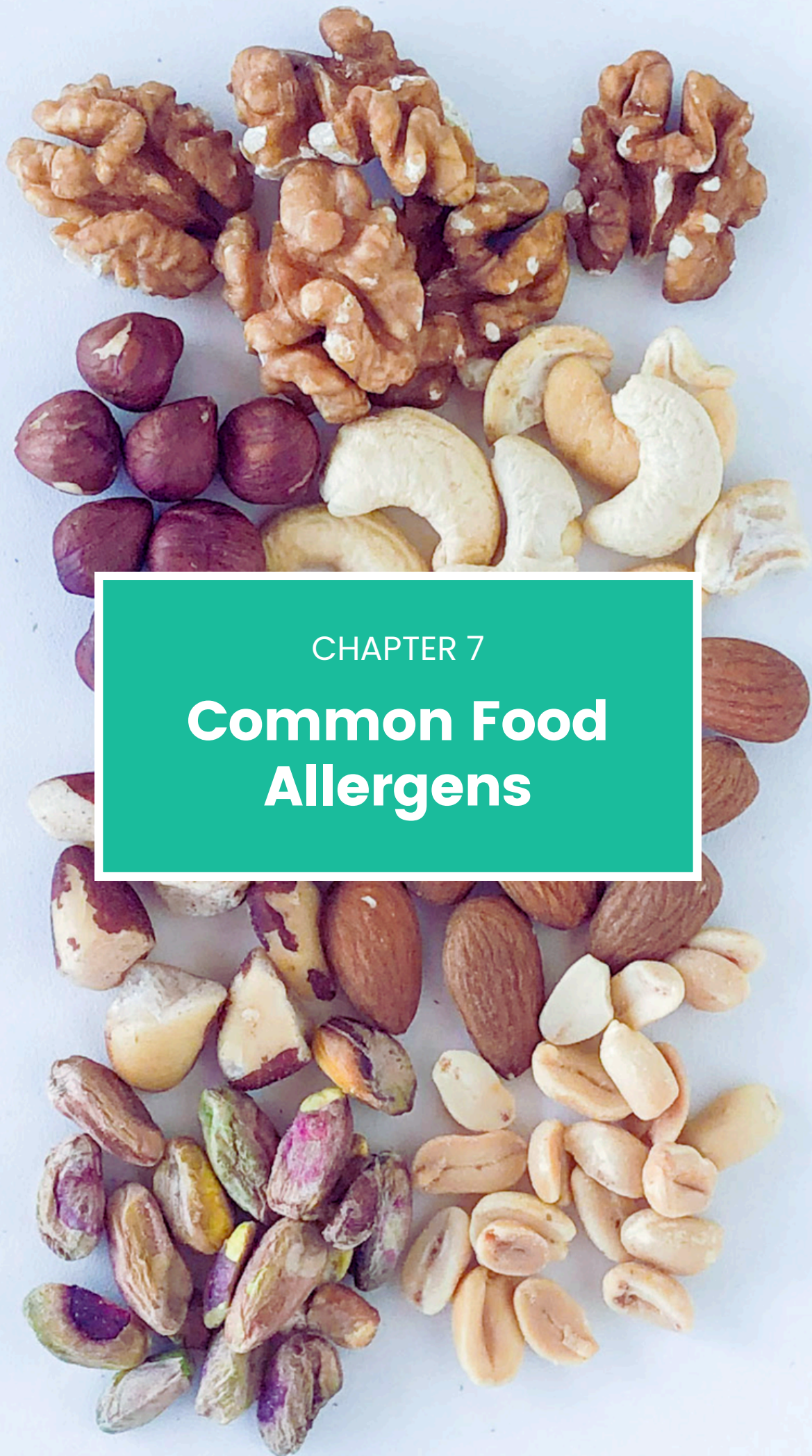
Chia Seeds



Raisins



See the step-by-step instructions on how to offer these foods and over 100 more in BLW Meals App's Free Food Library.



CHAPTER 7

# Common Food Allergens

# Allergenic Foods



Research shows that introducing certain allergenic foods early in infancy (especially peanut and egg) can reduce the risk of developing food allergies. The strongest evidence comes from randomized studies such as the LEAP trial for peanuts.

Current recommendations suggest introducing common allergenic foods once babies begin eating solids around 6 months of age.

It's important to remember that early introduction does not guarantee prevention, and the strength of the evidence varies by food. However, introducing these foods early may help reduce the risk.

The top nine food allergens (shown in the image below) account for about 90% of food allergies. For this reason, it's helpful to introduce these foods mindfully as your baby starts solids.

Most allergic reactions to food are caused by:



**Finned Fish**



**Soy**



**Wheat**



**Egg**



**Shellfish**



**Peanut**



**Dairy**



**Sesame**



**Tree Nuts**

# General recommendations for introducing the top allergens

Offer the allergenic food on its own or with another non-allergenic food that has previously been introduced.

## How to offer:

- 1** Start with a small amount of the food or a sauce containing that one allergen. **The allergen needs to be ingested** and **should not be rubbed on the skin first**.
  - 2** Offer early in the morning and observe over the next 12-24 hours.
  - 3** Continue to offer other non-allergenic foods.
  - 4** Offer it again **ONLY** if there is no reaction.
- !** **If there is any reaction, stop offering, contact your healthcare provider or emergency services immediately depending on the severity of the reaction.**



Document it in the notes section of BLW Meals App



Take photos of the reaction



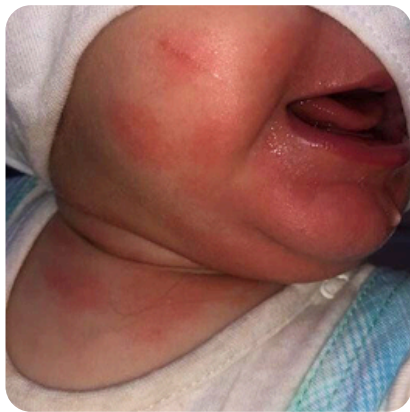
Share with your pediatrician

- If your baby shows **no sign of reactions** you can then **move on** to introducing the next allergen.
- Once allergens have been **introduced separately** you can **start combining them**, like pancakes which contain egg and flour.

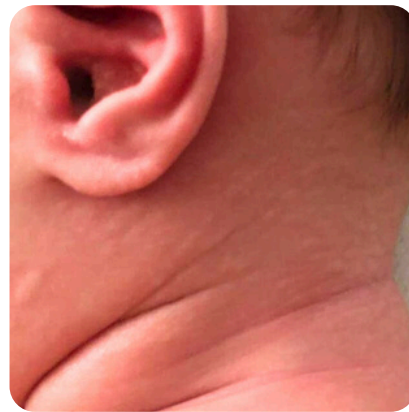
# Common allergy symptoms

- Swelling of the lips, face, or eyelids
- Small bumps, hives, or redness around the mouth or on the skin
- A skin rash
- Itching
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Difficulty breathing, wheezing, or persistent coughing (urgent)

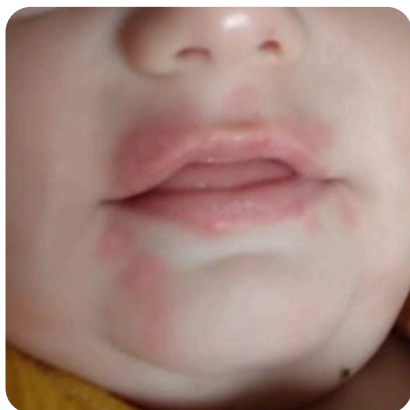
**Note:** symptoms of a food allergy usually appear within minutes to two hours after eating the food.



Redness and itching



Bumps on the skin



Small bumps



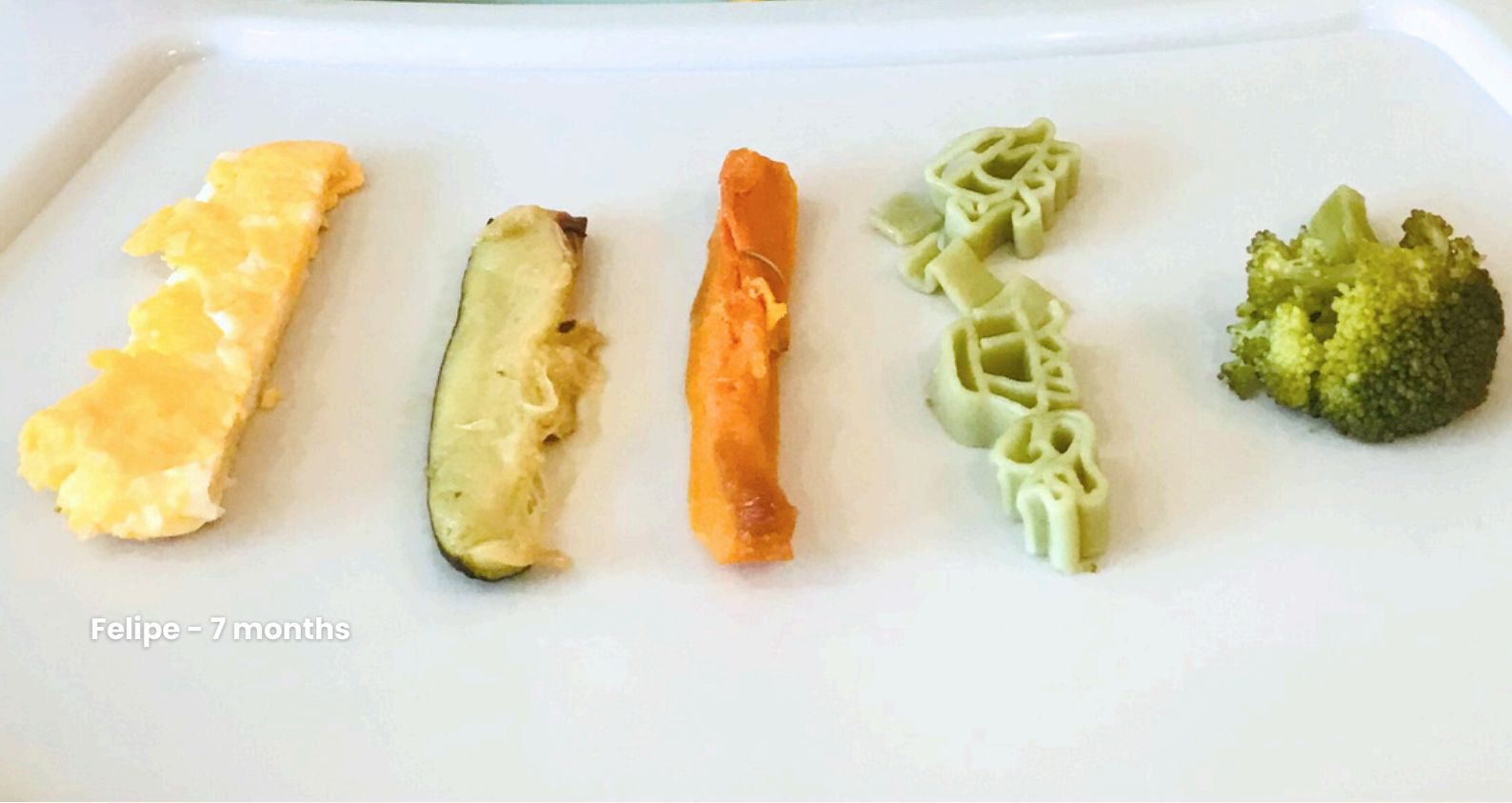
Swelling around the eyes



If your baby shows any of these reactions, do not offer the food again until you connect with your healthcare provider



CHAPTER 8  
**Preparing  
Meals**



Felipe - 7 months

# Which foods should I start with?

Even though it's common for families to start with fruits, that is not a rule. A variety of foods can be offered as your baby's first food.



## How many meals per day?

We recommend starting with one meal per day and adding about one meal per month as your baby gradually starts getting used to eating.

Keep in mind that there isn't an exact rule for this. If your baby seems interested, you can offer foods more often. If they aren't that interested in eating, it's okay to take it slowly.

This way, everything can flow smoothly without pressure for you or your baby. After all, adjusting to the new feeding routine can sometimes be a challenge.

Don't worry if your baby eats little or nothing in the beginning, breast milk or formula are still their main source of nutrition until the age of 1.

6 months	7 months	8-9 months	10 months	11 months +
1 meal	2 meals	3 meals	3 meals 1 snack*	3 meals + 1-2 snacks*

*\*snacks should be whole-food-focused and nutrient-dense. Look for snack ideas in BLW Meals App.*

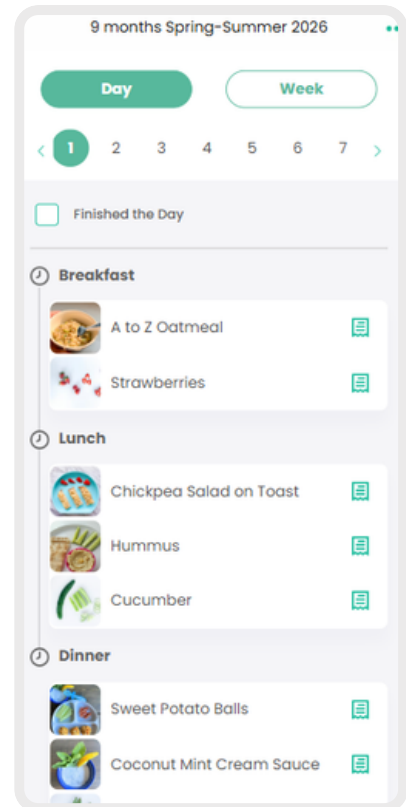
# Make things easier:

The **BLW Meals App** has meal plans developed by pediatric dietitians for each month and stage of your baby's development.

They take into account allergen introduction, smart use of leftovers and seasonal foods.



Start by browsing the app's **meal plan for baby's first 30 days**



## Suggested menu for the first 7 days

### Day 1



Avocado

### Day 2



Egg\*

### Day 3



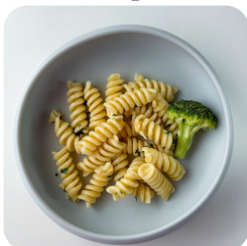
Egg\* + Avocado

### Day 4



Broccoli Omelet\*  
+ Sweet Potato

### Day 5



Pasta\* +  
Broccoli

### Day 6



Pasta\* +  
Meatballs +  
Tomato wedge

### Day 7



Banana  
Oatmeal



Remember to choose a time when your baby is most willing to engage with food.

*\*We start introducing the top food allergens from the beginning.*

**Note: To help meet iron needs, please prioritize offering iron sources multiple times after they are tolerated.** It's also important to continue to give breastmilk or formula, and if your child is at risk for anemia contact your pediatrician.

# How to build baby's plate

Compose the plate with:

1

**Fruits or veggies:**  
tomatoes, berries,  
broccoli, green  
beans



2

**Energy rich food:**  
avocado, grains,  
oils, roots, veggies

3

**Iron rich foods:**  
Meats, beans, legumes, eggs

3

**Iron-rich foods:**  
salmon



2

**Energy rich food:**  
potato + oil

1

**Fruits or veggies:**  
green beans

# Pick from each food group:

## 1 Fruits & Veggies

### Fruits

Avocado  
Pineapple  
Plum  
Blackberry  
Guava  
Kiwi  
Orange  
Apple  
Papaya  
Watermelon  
Melon  
Strawberry  
Pear  
Grape

## 2 Energy-rich foods

### Grains & Roots & legumes

Rice  
Oats  
Potatoes  
Yams  
Pasta  
Bread  
Beans  
Lentils  
Chickpeas

### Vegetables

Pumpkin  
Zucchini  
Eggplant  
Beetroot  
Broccoli  
Carrot  
Chayote  
Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Spinach

## 3 Iron-rich foods

### Plant sources

Beans  
Peas  
Chickpeas  
Lentils  
Soy (tofu)

### Animal sources

Egg  
Fish  
Chicken  
Beef  
Pork

# How much food should I offer?

Don't worry if your baby eats very little at first. It's common for babies to eat small amounts, or sometimes nothing at all, especially in the early stages of starting solids.

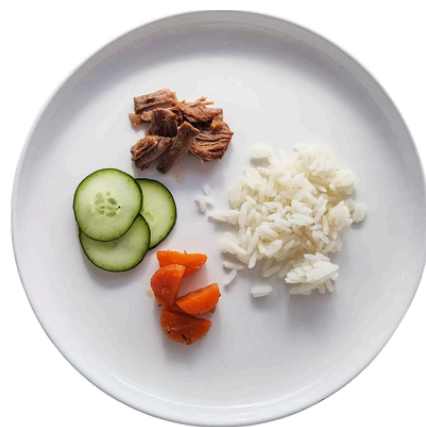
Babies are born with a natural ability to regulate their appetite and sense of fullness. They are very capable of recognising when they are hungry and when they have had enough, even if the amount they eat looks different from what you expected.



**The amount you put on your plate...**



**...often, is not what baby needs.**



A helpful rule of thumb is to **begin by offering about 1–2 tablespoons of each food or 1–2 safe stick-shapes**. This keeps portions manageable and reduces pressure on both you and your baby. If they are still interested, you can always offer more. Starting small allows them to explore food at their own pace without feeling overwhelmed by large portions.

## Keep in mind:



The goal of this stage is to expose your baby to a variety of flavors and textures, not to fill their tummy with food. Breast milk/formula should be the primary source of nutrition until 1 year of age.



CHAPTER 9

**How Do I Deal  
with the Mess?**

Waverly - 7 months

# How do I deal with the mess?

No matter which approach you choose for introducing solid foods, you need to be realistic: mess is inevitable.

**Here are some ways to minimize the mess and clean-up:**

- **Use a food-collecting bib:** food falls directly into the pocket and babies will often pick it out themselves.
- **Serve small portions:** place 2-3 pieces of food on their plate or tray at a time and offer more when they finish.
- **Protect the floor:** use a waterproof mat under the highchair or, if you prefer, sit your baby on the mat itself for a picnic-style meal. After the meal, simply shake it out and clean it with a damp cloth or in the washing machine.
- **Reuse leftover food:** if your baby didn't touch it or put it in their mouth, you can save the food and serve it again the same way or add it into another dish. See **recipes suggestions** available in BLW Meals App.
- **Wait to wipe:** It's not recommended to wipe their face during the meal. Wait until the end.



High Iron Mini Muffins



Easy Broccoli Mac & Cheese

# Remember

- 1 Babies, objects, and surfaces are washable.**
- 2 Your baby is learning**, so try to be patient. At this stage, they are not yet able to pick up small pieces of food with dexterity. It's practice without intervention that will help your baby improve their motor skills.
- 3** Over time, **the mess will disappear**, giving way to learning experiences and positive memories at the table, as well as a good relationship with food.



**Happy, messy babies!**

Developed by



Following the guidelines set by

American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



A top-down view of a grey metal muffin tray containing several golden-brown muffins. Each muffin is held in a different colored silicone liner: red, pink, yellow, and teal. The muffins have a slightly textured surface with some dark specks, possibly seeds or herbs. In the background, a piece of light brown burlap fabric is visible. A teal rectangular box with a white border is centered over the tray, containing the text 'CHAPTER 10' and 'Recipes' in white.

CHAPTER 10  
**Recipes**

# Banana Pancakes

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 1 ripe banana, mashed (~1/2 cup, 120 g)
- 1 egg (50 g) or 1 flax egg\*
- 3 tablespoons (18 g) oat flour (or baby oat cereal)
- Cinnamon, to taste (optional)
- Coconut oil or butter, for greasing

\*For flax egg: Mix 1 tablespoon (7g) ground flax seeds with 2.5 tablespoons (38 ml) water

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, lightly beat the egg with a fork or whisk.
2. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. For a smoother batter, blend it all together in a blender.
3. Heat a non-stick skillet on medium heat and grease with a 1-2 tsp of coconut oil (or butter). Be sure to spread oil evenly across the pan.
4. Pour ~2 tablespoons of batter onto the skillet. Cook on medium-low heat until bottom side starts to brown (~2 minutes), then flip and cook the other side (~2 minutes). These are easier to flip and cook if you make smaller pancakes.

**Storage:** can be kept in the fridge for up to 3 days or freezer for up to 3 months.

**Suitable from:** 6 months on, as long as the allergen egg has been introduced (unless using flax egg) and gluten-free oats are used.

## How to offer:

- Around 6-8 months, offer small pancakes whole or cut in half to make it easier for baby to hold and self-feed.
- After the pincer grasp, offer whole or cut into bite-sized pieces.

# Easy Broccoli Mac & Cheese

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 8 ounces (230g) short pasta
- 3 cups broccoli (fresh or frozen), roughly chopped
- 3/4 cup (6 ounces/170g) cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (for under 12 months choose lower sodium, like mozzarella)
- Salt - to taste (12 months+)
- Pepper - to taste

## Directions:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil.
2. Boil pasta according to package instructions. Small shell-shaped pasta or macaroni pasta shapes work best for this recipe.
3. After pasta has been cooking for ~4-5 minutes, add broccoli to the water.
4. Boil an additional 3-5 minutes until broccoli and pasta are soft.
5. Reserve ~2 cups of pasta water.
6. Drain pasta and broccoli with a colander.
7. To the same pot on low heat, add cream cheese, butter, 1-1.5 cups of pasta water, garlic powder, pepper and salt (if using) whisk until smooth. Add more pasta water if the sauce is too thick.
8. Add the pasta and broccoli back in, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and stir to combine.

**Storage:** Can be stored for up to 3 days in the refrigerator. For reheating you can add 1 tablespoon of cream cheese to make it creamy again.

**Suitable from:** 6 months as long as salt is omitted and the allergens wheat & dairy have been introduced.

**How to offer:** With palmar grasp (around 6-8 months), let baby eat with their hands and get messy, alternatively, you can mash everything for responsive spoonfeeding. You can also use longer pasta such as penne or fusilli.

With pincer grasp (around 9 months +), let them eat with their hands or you can load it onto forks for them to pick up and self-feed.

# Pumpkin Applesauce Puree

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup (80 g) pureed pumpkin (I used canned unsweetened)
- 1/2 cup (120 g) applesauce (unsweetened)
- 1/4 teaspoon (0.6 g) pumpkin pie spice seasoning or to taste

## Directions:

1. Mix all the ingredients together until incorporated. You can adjust the thickness or sweetness by adding more or less applesauce.

**Storage:** Can be stored for up to 2-3 days in the refrigerator or freeze in ice cube trays for up to 3 months.

**Suitable from:** 6 months+

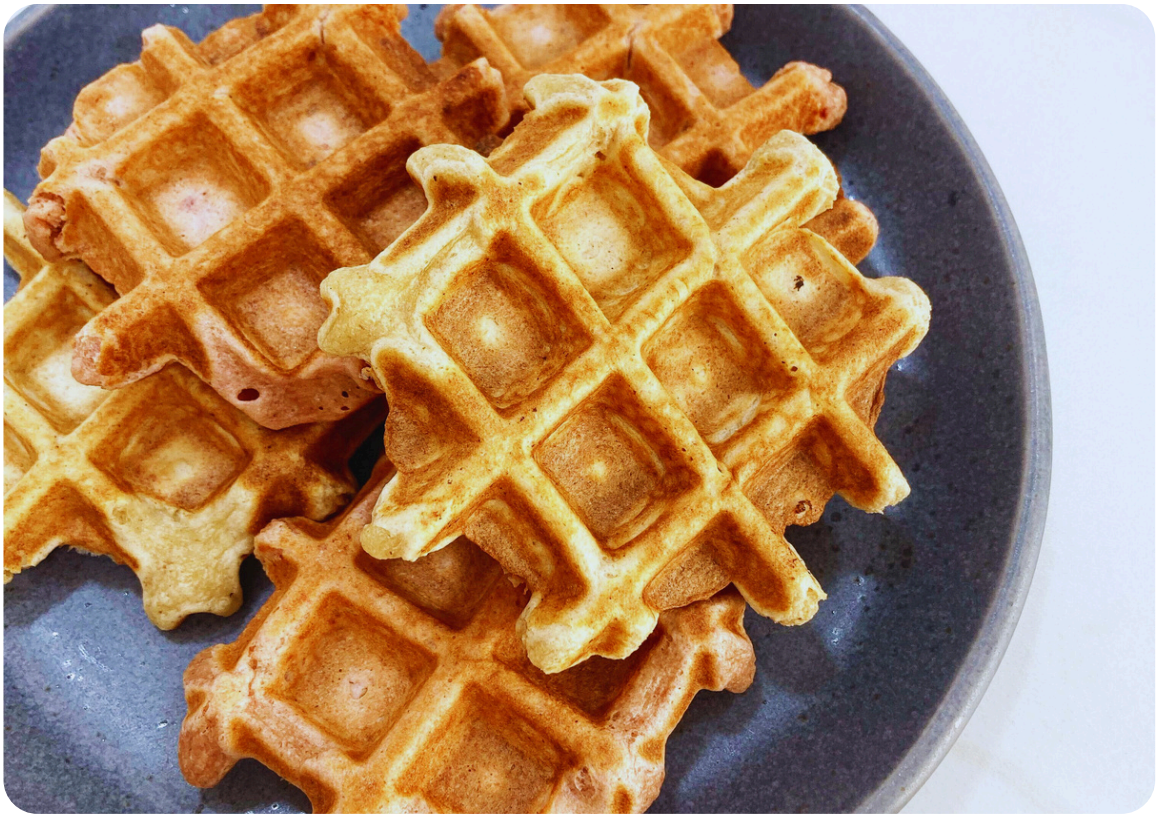
## How to offer:

- Responsive spoon-feeding, where baby leans in to take a bite and eat.
- Offer preloaded spoons for baby to eat/explore.
- Let them explore with their hands and get messy.

Keep in mind that the amount babies eat will vary, so start small with 1-2 tablespoons of food and advance as you learn your baby's hunger/fullness cues.

# Yogurt Waffles

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup (120 g) whole milk plain yogurt, or Greek
- 4-5 tablespoons (~70g) oat flour (gluten-free if necessary)
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- Optional: 1 tablespoon date paste
- Optional: 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

## Directions:

1. Start heating the waffle iron so it's nice and hot when you are ready to cook the waffles.
2. Mix all the ingredients together until incorporated. Be careful not to over mix.
3. Pour a ladle-full of mixture onto the greased, heated iron and cook until golden brown.

**Storage:** Can be stored in an airtight container (after cooling) for up to 3 days. They can also be frozen for up to 3 months.

**Suitable from:** 6 months+ as long as allergens (eggs and dairy) have been introduced.

## How to offer:

- With palmar grasp (~6 months), cut into long finger-length strips for baby to easily hold on to.
- With pincer grasp (~9 months), offer in strips or bite-sized pieces.

Keep in mind that the amount babies eat will vary, so start small with 1-2 tablespoons of food and advance as you learn your baby's hunger/fullness cues.

# A to Z Oatmeal

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 1 cup (120 g) zucchini, grated (don't remove water)
- 1 cup (240 ml) milk (plant-based or cow's)
- 1 cup (90 g) quick oats (gluten-free if necessary)
- 3/4 cup (180 g) unsweetened applesauce
- 1/4 teaspoon (0.6 g) cinnamon (more if preferred)

## Directions:

1. Grate zucchini with a cheese grater (do not squeeze out excess water).
2. In a sauce pan on medium heat, pour in milk and heat for ~ 1-2 minutes, then add quick oats, applesauce, zucchini and cinnamon.
3. Cook on medium heat for 2-5 minutes, stirring frequently, until desired texture, You may continue to add warmed milk/water until desired texture.
4. You can make this and separate it into individual portions to reheat in the microwave for 30 seconds at a time, and add a 1-2 TBSP of milk or liquid of choice until desired texture.

**Storage:** Can be stored for up to 3 days in the refrigerator

**Suitable from:** 6 months+

## How to offer:

- Responsive spoon-feeding, where baby leans in to take a bite and eat.
- Offer preloaded spoons for baby to eat/explore.
- Let them explore with their hands and get messy.

Keep in mind that the amount babies eat will vary, so start small with 1-2 tablespoons of food and advance as you learn your baby's hunger/fullness cues.

# Banana Yogurt Mini Muffins

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup (60 g) unsalted butter (softened)
- 1 large egg (room temp.)
- 3 tablespoons (45 g) plain yogurt
- 1 & 1/4 cup (300 g) mashed overripe bananas (3-4 very ripe large bananas)
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla extract
- 1 cup (120 g) all purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon (3 g) baking soda
- 1/8 teaspoon (0.5 g) salt (optional, only for 12 months +)
- 1/2 teaspoon (1.5 g) ground cinnamon

## Directions:

1. Heat oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Grease 2 mini-muffin pans (~24 pods) or line with mini muffin liners.
3. In a large mixer bowl cream the butter.
4. Add the egg, vanilla, yogurt and mashed banana, mix well.
5. In a separate bowl, mix together flour, baking soda, salt (if using) and cinnamon.
6. Fold the dry ingredients into the banana mixture and stir to combine, don't over mix.
7. Spoon batter into prepared muffin pans. Fill until about 3/4 full as they will grow in the oven.
8. Bake in the oven for 15-18 minutes, until the tops bounce back when touched

**Storage:** Can be stored in an airtight container for up to 3 days

**Suitable from:** 6 months+ as long as the allergens (egg, dairy and wheat) have been introduced.

**How to offer:** With palmar grasp (around 6-8 months), offer mini muffins whole.

With pincer grasp (around 9 months +), offer mini muffins whole or cut into quarters.

Keep in mind that the amount babies eat will vary, so start small with 1-2 tablespoons of each food and advance as you learn your baby's hunger/fullness cues.

# Broccoli Cheddar Bites

+6 months



## Ingredients:

- 1 cup of small broccoli florets
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup (50g) shredded cheddar cheese (or lower sodium cheese like mozzarella for under 12 months)
- 1 tablespoon ground flax seeds

## Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Grease a mini-muffin pan or line with 4 cupcake liners.
3. Steam broccoli florets until they are soft. In the microwave: place the florets in a microwave-safe bowl with about 1 inch of water at the bottom. Cover with the lid or a plate and microwave on high for 3-4 minutes.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg, cheese, and ground flax seed.
5. Dice broccoli into smaller pieces and add them to the egg mixture.
6. Once combined, spoon into the prepared muffin pan.
7. Bake for about 15 minutes or until they are golden brown.

**Storage:** Can be stored for up to 3 days in the refrigerator or in the freezer for up to 3 months

**Suitable from:** 6 months+ as long as the allergens egg and dairy have been introduced

**How to offer:** With palmar grasp (around 6-8 months), offer bites whole for baby to easily hold on to. With pincer grasp (around 9 months +), offer bites whole or cut into bite-size pieces for them to pick up.

# Zucchini Pancakes

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup (60 g) oat flour
- 1/4 teaspoon (0.6 g) ground cinnamon
- 1 & 1/4 teaspoon (5 g) baking powder
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) oil of your choosing
- 1/2 cup (60 g) shredded zucchini (squeeze water out after measuring)
- 1/3 cup pea milk (or other)
- 1 tablespoon (80 ml) ground flaxseed

## Directions:

1. In a large bowl, stir together the first 3 ingredients.
2. Place the shredded zucchini in a clean dish towel and squeeze excess water.
3. Add the zucchini and remaining ingredients to the bowl and mix to combine.
4. Heat a non-stick frying pan or griddle over low-medium heat. Grease the pan and ladle-on the pancake batter, you can also use a medium cookie scoop. Smaller pancakes are easier to flip and cook through.
5. Flip the pancakes once the bottoms start to brown. Cook the other side until golden-brown.

**Tip:** Serve slightly warm with the topping of your choice (yogurt, butter, nut butter, jam...)

**Storage:** Can be kept in the refrigerator for about 3 days.

**Suitable from:** 6 months+

**How to offer:** With palmar grasp (around 6-8 months), offer small pancakes whole or cut into strips 2 fingers-wide and 1 finger-long.

With pincer grasp (around 9 months +), offer pancakes in strips as before or cut into bite-size pieces.

# Creamy Tomato Soup

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 7 whole large tomatoes (~1,4 kg)
- 2 yellow sweet onions (~300 g)
- 2 cups (480 ml) low sodium broth (chicken or vegetable)
- 1 cup (150 g) cashews (unsalted)\*
- 10 basil leaves
- 3 garlic cloves (~9 g), minced
- 1 tablespoon (3 g) dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon (1 g) dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) avocado oil

## Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Soak cashews in 1 cup water while oven heats.
2. Wash and dice your tomatoes, onion and garlic cloves then toss them in the avocado oil and place them on a large baking stone/ sheet and roast for about 40 minutes.
3. Drain water from cashews. When your veggies are done roasting, puree them in a high power blender or food processor along with the cashews, thyme, oregano, and basil leaves. Be sure to open the vent on the food processor or blender as the hot veggies can cause pressure to build in the blender. Add a bit of the broth to help thin the mixture as needed.
4. Once blended, pour the mixture into a stock pot along with the remainder of the broth and simmer on low heat for before serving. For best flavor may simmer for 1 hour.

**Storage:** Can be stored for up to 3 days in the refrigerator

**Suitable from:** 6 months+ as long as the allergen cashew has been introduced

## How to offer:

- Responsive spoon-feeding, where baby leans in to take a bite.
- Offer pre-loaded spoons for baby to eat/explore
- Serve in a cup for baby to drink.

# Egg Avocado Mash

6 months+



## Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 avocado
- Optional seasoning to taste: chives, paprika, black pepper...

## Directions:

1. Place eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water (eggs should be covered by at least 1 inch of water). Bring water to a boil.
2. Boil for 8-10 minutes, then run under cold water or place in a bowl of ice water and peel (when eggs boil for more than 12 minutes, the egg yolks start to turn greenish-gray with an odor of sulfur).
3. In a medium bowl, mash the eggs, then add the avocado and mash together. Season to taste.

**Storage:** Can be stored in the refrigerator for 1 day, but is best if eaten right away.

**Suitable from:** 6 months+ as long as the allergen egg has been introduced

## How to offer:

- Spread on toast strips or tortillas
- Let them explore with their hands and get messy.
- Responsive spoon-feeding, where baby leans in to take a bite and eat.
- Offer preloaded spoons for baby to eat/explore.

Keep in mind that the amount babies eat will vary, so start small with 1-2 tablespoons of food and advance as you learn your baby's hunger/fullness cues.



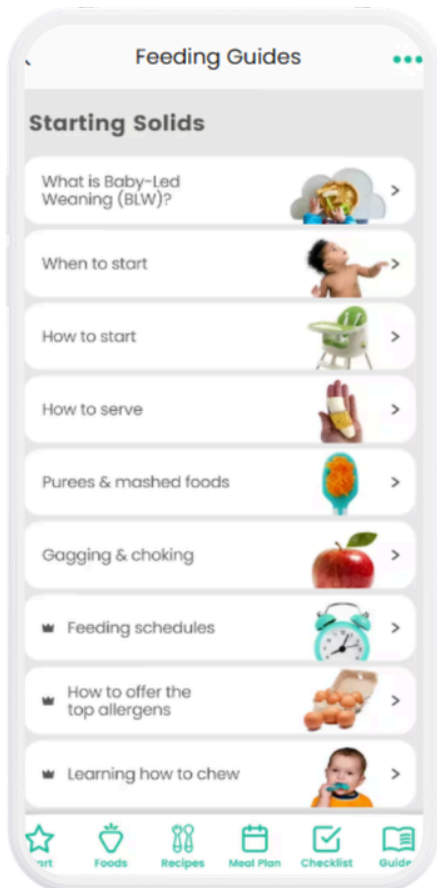
CHAPTER 11

# BLW Meals App

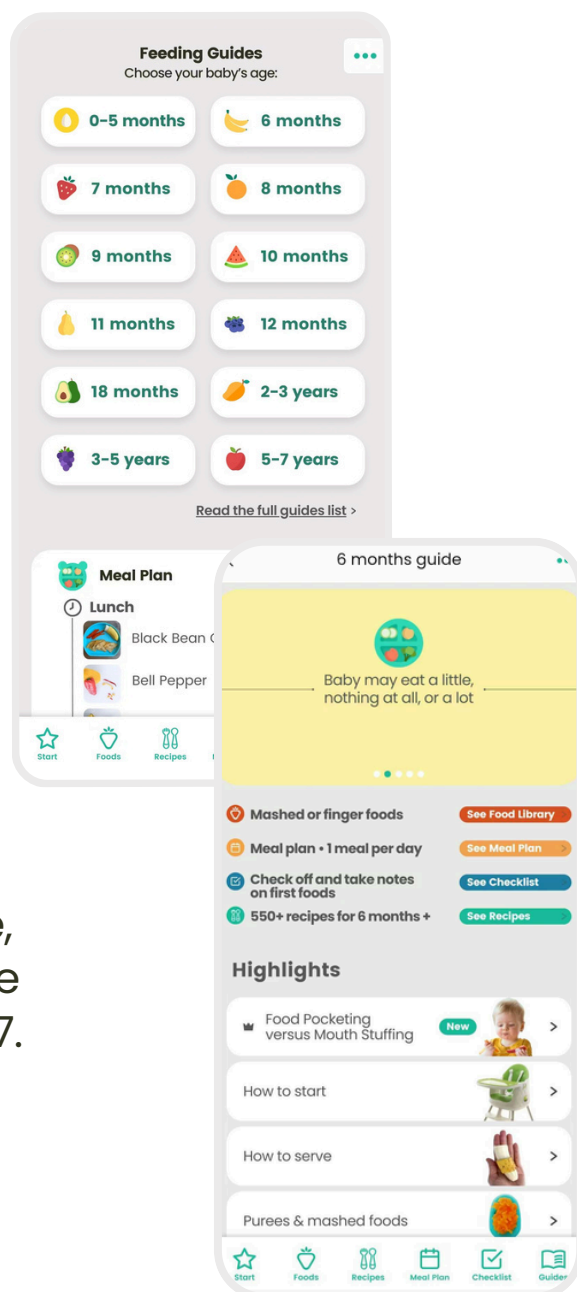
# Get to know BLW Meals App



BLW Meals is an app created to support families who are starting solids. It brings together evidence-based information, recipes, meal plans, and many more practical tools to simplify your routine.



Read expert-designed **feeding guides** with everything you need to confidently feed your child.



## Guides by age:

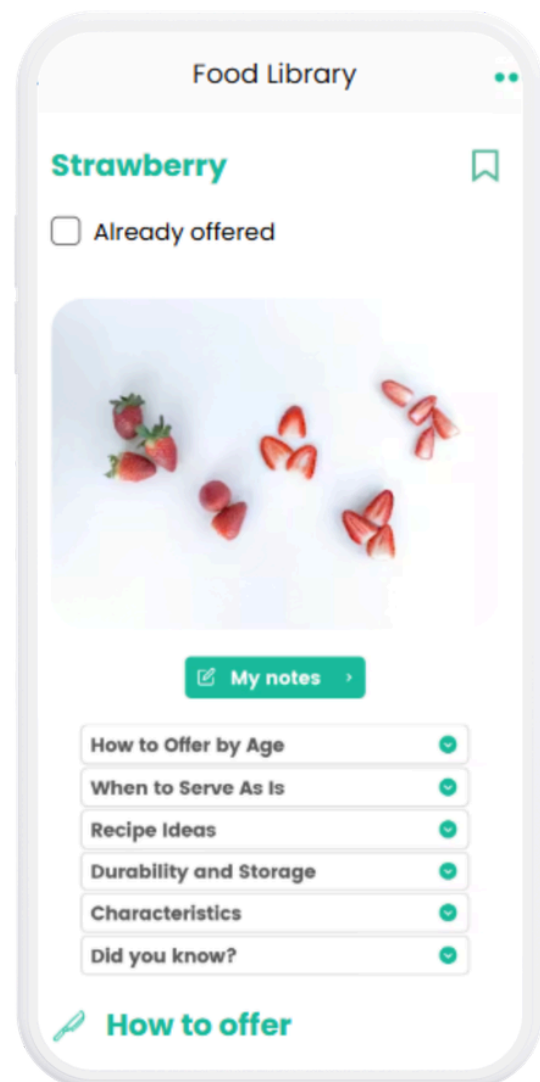
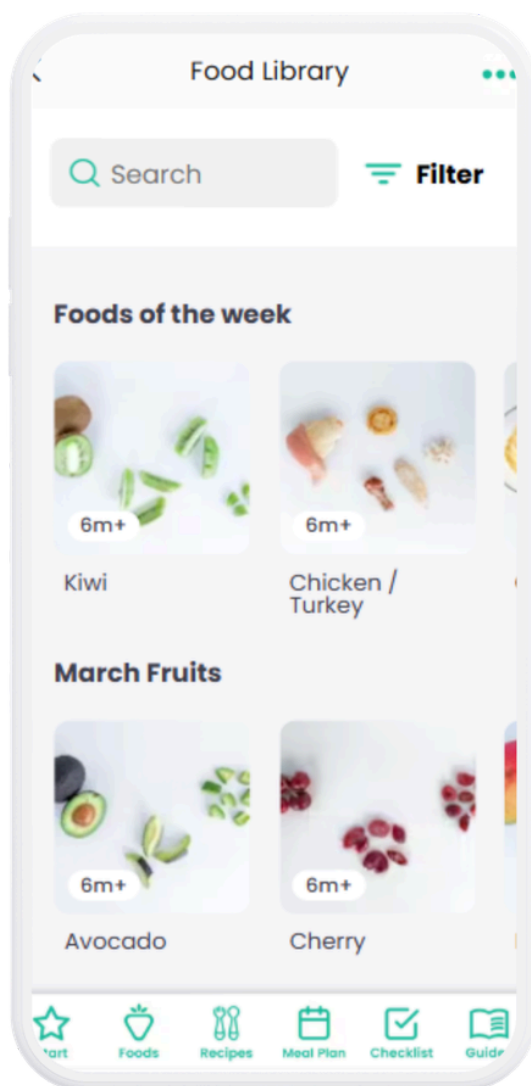
Content tailored to each stage, from starting solids through the picky eating phase, up to age 7.

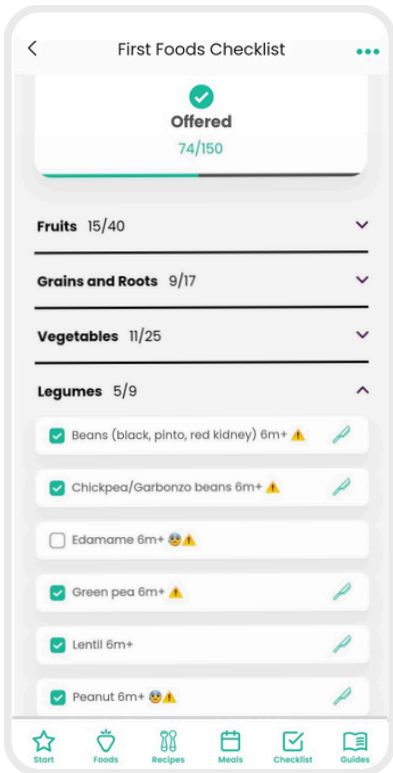
# Learn and Track



## Free Food Library:

See how to safely offer 100+ foods to your baby, including how to cut and cook at different stages, allergy information and more!





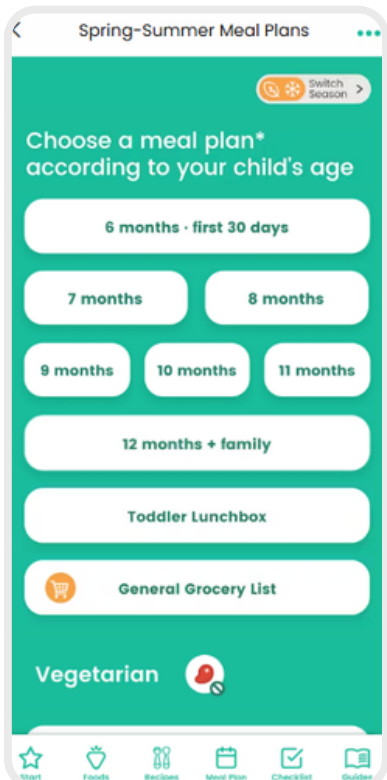
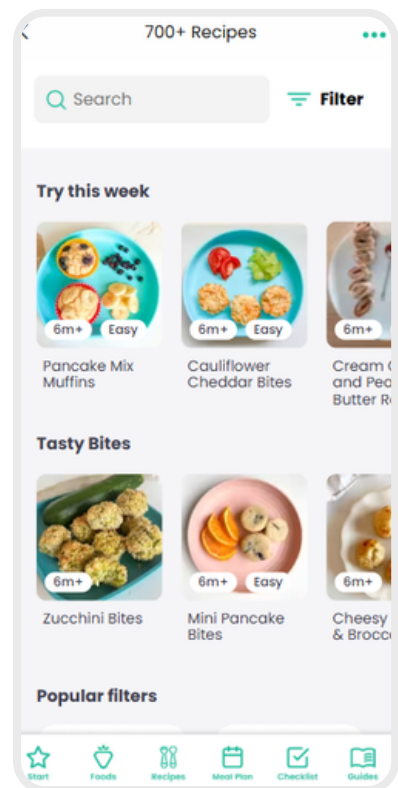
## Checklist

Keep track of the foods already offered and get ideas on what's left to offer with our interactive checklist. Take notes on how baby reacted.

There are over **170 foods** to mark, plus the option to add new foods.

## Recipes

- Over 700 dietitian-approved recipes
- Filter recipes by age, meal, cooking time, ingredients, etc.
- Save your favorite recipes.
- Create custom folders



## Meal Plans

Ready-made meal plans designed by pediatric dietitians for each stage of your baby's feeding journey, including Vegetarian Meal Plans and options for the Southern Hemisphere.

Our meal plans are linked to our recipes and food library so you know how to offer everything safely!



CHAPTER 12

**References &  
Acknowledgements**

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With love,

**Juliana Brêtas – Founder and CEO**

# Thank you!

We hope this guide has been helpful in providing up-to-date information and making this phase of starting solids easier, safer, and more enjoyable. Feel free to share this material with anyone you think might benefit from it. Keep learning and getting inspired through our social media!

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Together, we can help make every meal a moment of discovery and connection.

Warmly,  
BLW Meals Team

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