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BABY-LED WEANING



WHAT IS IT?

Baby-Led Weaning (BLW) is a method of introducing solid foods to infants around 6 months old where they hold the foods and feed themselves.



Feature	Baby-Led Weaning	Traditional Feeding
Feeding Method	Self-fed	Spoon-fed
Food Texture	Finger foods	Purees
Control	Baby-led	Parent-led
Skill Developed	Chewing & motor skills	Swallow first

Know the difference between gagging and choking.

Gagging

- Normal
- How the body automatically protects us from choking.
- A baby's gag reflex starts out as very sensitive.
 - As they learn and practice eating foods, the gag reflex "moves" further back in the mouth.
- It's a loud process.
 - The baby will cough or gag, spit out food, possibly even throw up.
 - Tongue is out of the mouth to help food leave.
- Intervention is not needed from the parent.

Choking

- Emergency
- The food went past the baby's gag reflex and has moved to the airway.
- The airway is partially or fully blocked, causing trouble breathing.
- It's a silent process.
 - The baby may not be able to cry, may look panicked, have trouble breathing, and skin may turn a pale or blue color.
- Intervention is needed from the parent.

SAFETY TIPS

- Don't attempt baby-led weaning until your baby is at least 6 months old and showing signs of readiness.
- Avoid choking hazards and offer foods in manageable sizes.
 - Cut firm, round foods (like whole berries or whole grapes) into quarters
 - Avoid hard, crunchy foods (like tortilla chips, popcorn, or nuts).
 - Encourage slow eating, such as only putting a few pieces of food at a time in front of the baby.
- Always seat your baby upright and make sure they're well-supported and supervised.



BENEFITS

Saves time and money

Offers baby the same or similar foods to what the rest of the family is eating.

Encourages independence and motor skills.

Babies can learn both fine motor and oral motor skills, such as picking up the food, bringing it to their mouth, chewing, and swallowing.

Encourages self-regulation.

Babies eat at their own pace, which can help them figure out and regulate their appetites.

Helps develop exploration into healthy eating habits.

Babies can quickly become exposed to a variety of food textures and tastes.

Reduces picky eating behavior.

Babies are more likely to try new foods through social interaction and when seeing the rest of the family eating similar foods.

WHEN TO START

**Baby-led weaning can be started
around 6 months old**

Physical signs your baby is ready:

- They can sit upright, with minimal to no support from a parent or caregiver.
- They can reach for objects.
- They can put things in their mouths.
- Their tongue-thrust reflex is gone or going away.
 - They don't immediately use their tongue to spit something out of their mouth.

Helpful Tip: Spoon Feedings

- Babies are encouraged to use spoons and their hands to feed themselves to foster combinations of self-feeding.
- Parents don't have to give up offering pureed foods through spoon feedings with BLW.
 - Instead, infants can have more control by holding the spoon and feeding themselves.



HOW TO GET STARTED

- Offer foods that are:
 - Nutritious (think whole foods, rather than processed ones).
 - Easy to eat with fingers (even if they're messy!).
 - Not too hard, chewy, or sticky.
 - Around room temperature
- Let your baby explore different textures and flavors.
- Stay patient and expect a mess!

Starter Foods:

Category	Foods to Try	Tips
Fruits	Bananas, pears, avocados, kiwi, mango, applesauce, strawberries	Cut round fruits into quarters, like grapes and berries.
Vegetables	Most peeled and cooked vegetables, like sweet potatoes, carrots, and squash.	Cut vegetables into small bites. Avoid hard or textured raw vegetables, like carrots or celery.
Proteins	Ground, soft, cooked, and shredded meats and fish. Tofu, yogurt, and well-cooked scrambled eggs.	Avoid tough or chewy proteins, like steak. Avoid meats and fish with bones, and fish known to be high in mercury.
Grains	Long, thin strips of toast; cooked pasta; cooked, soft rice	Avoid sweetened adult cereals.