

The Parents' Guide to Baby-Led Weaning

Skip the purées and go straight to solids!



With
125
Recipes



Jennifer House, MSc, RD

What Is Baby-Led Weaning?

Did You Know?

Benefits of Family Mealtime

Adolescents who have regular family meals not only have a more nutritious diet, but get better grades in school and are less likely to be involved in risky activities like drug and alcohol use.

In North America, we use the term “weaning” to mean discontinuing breastfeeding. We won’t be discussing weaning from the breast in detail in this book, but please continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your baby desire!

So what exactly is baby-led weaning? In this context, “weaning” means that your baby is starting to eat solid foods. You skip right past the stage where you feed your baby puréed food from a spoon and allow him to feed himself real solid foods. Here are a few key ideas that help to define baby-led weaning:

- 1. Your baby self-feeds:** Rather than you spoon-feeding your baby, she is in charge of picking up the food and getting it into her own mouth. Your baby has full control, right from the start, over which foods she chooses to eat from what you’ve offered, and how much to eat.
- 2. Your baby eats family food:** Quite quickly (even from the beginning, for some), you can offer your baby the same foods you are eating. There’s no need to make extra “baby” meals. Ease is one of the major benefits of baby-led weaning!
- 3. Your baby joins in family mealtimes:** Everybody sits together for meals, as your baby’s schedule allows. You don’t have to feed your baby purées and then sit down to your (now cold!) meal. Family mealtimes produce great benefits throughout your child’s life and are a wonderful habit to start from the beginning!

You don’t have to be militant about defining or practicing baby-led weaning. You may choose to offer your baby some puréed food along with finger foods. Or you may have already started with purées and are now looking for more ideas about introducing finger foods. That’s okay. You didn’t damage or confuse your baby by offering him puréed baby food: despite what you read in that Facebook group, there is no evidence to support that idea. It’s more important to be truly baby-led than to be an official “baby-led weaner.” No matter how you start solids, don’t force your baby to eat more or less than the amount he wants, or to eat certain sizes or textures of food before he can handle them.

When to Start — Is My Baby Ready?

- Your baby is 6 months old.
- Your baby has lost the tongue-thrust reflex and doesn’t automatically push solids back out of her mouth with her tongue.
- Your baby can sit up well in his high chair.
- Your baby has good arm and trunk strength. She can push up on her arms when lying on her tummy and is able to lean forward to grab or spit out food.
- Your baby can pick up foods with his palm.
- Your baby seems excited to eat and grabs at your food.

Note: Reasons to begin do not include “My baby is small and needs extra calories” or “My baby is big and needs fewer calories.” See page xxx for more details.

Benefits of Baby-Led Weaning

Baby-led weaning comes with many practical benefits. Many parents choose to use it because it’s quick, enjoyable for your baby and inexpensive. If you work outside the home or have more than one child, you may especially value the ease and time savings! But there are some physiological reasons why baby-led weaning can benefit your baby, too. Here are six reasons why baby-led weaning may be a good choice for your baby.

- 1. Nutrition:** Whole foods have the potential to be more nutritious than purées, which are often watered down. Plus, early exposure to the different flavors and textures of family meals may help to decrease future picky eating!
- 2. Development:** Your baby will develop chewing skills and finger dexterity sooner.
- 3. Healthy weight:** Giving your baby full control over how much to eat will help her grow into the weight that’s right for her.
- 4. A healthy relationship with food:** Allowing your child to control how much he eats (no “Here comes the airplane!” with a loaded spoon) will help him grow up to have a healthy relationship with food and the ability to listen to his appetite.

Did You Know?

You’re the Boss

One research group classifies babies as baby-led weaned if 90% of their food intake comes from self-feeding table food, allowing for 10% spoon-feeding with purées. You can choose to practice baby-led weaning any way you like, based on what works for you and your baby.

Tasty Fish Cakes

Makes 4 servings

Salmon is one of the best sources of omega-3 fats, which are important for your baby's eye and brain development. Canned salmon is a good way to introduce fish and has the bonus of extra calcium if it contains the soft fish bones.

Tip

Use plain puréed or mashed potato, without milk or butter added.

This recipe courtesy of Eileen Campbell

1	can (7½ oz/213 g) salmon, drained, skin and large bones removed (or 6 oz/ 175 g leftover cooked salmon)	1
1 cup	puréed or mashed potatoes	250 mL
¼ cup	finely chopped green onion	60 mL
¼ cup	finely chopped red bell pepper	60 mL
3 tbsp	chopped fresh dill	45 mL
3 tbsp	milk	45 mL
	Freshly ground black pepper	
1	egg, beaten	1
	Vegetable cooking spray	

1. In a medium bowl, combine salmon, potatoes, green onion, red pepper, dill and milk. Season to taste with pepper. Gently stir in egg. Form mixture into four ¾-inch (2 cm) thick cakes. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or overnight to let flavor develop.
2. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Spray with vegetable cooking spray. Add fish cakes and cook for about 2 minutes per side, or until browned on both sides and hot in the center.

Variation

Vary the flavor by using 6 oz (175 g) cooked haddock, crab or diced shrimp instead of salmon. Change the herbs and veggies depending on the fish or seafood you choose.

Creamy Bow-Ties with Chicken, Spinach and Peppers

Makes 4 servings

This tasty recipe will become a family favorite. It's a one-pot meal that encompasses all four food groups! Your baby should be able to pick up the strips of chicken and bowtie pasta, to dig in along with the rest of the family.

This recipe courtesy of Lisa Wik

6 oz	bow-tie pasta	175 g
12 oz	boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into strips	375 g
1 tbsp	vegetable oil	15 mL
1 cup	julienned red bell peppers	250 mL
2 cups	shredded fresh spinach	500 mL
2 tsp	lemon juice	10 mL
1 tbsp	flour	15 mL
1 tsp	minced garlic	5 mL
2 cups	milk	500 mL
¼ tsp	nutmeg	1 mL
¼ tsp	black pepper	1 mL
¾ cup	shredded old white Cheddar cheese	175 mL
¼ cup	grated Parmesan cheese	50 mL

1. In a large pot of boiling water, cook pasta until tender but firm; drain. Rinse under hot water; drain. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, spray a large skillet with vegetable spray. Add chicken strips and cook over medium-high heat for 4 to 5 minutes or until browned and juices run clear when chicken is pierced with a fork. Transfer to a plate.
3. In the same skillet, heat 1 tsp (5 mL) of the oil over medium heat. Add peppers and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes or until slightly softened. Stir in spinach and cook for 1 to 2 minutes or until wilted. Stir in lemon juice. Transfer vegetables to a bowl and set aside.
4. In the same pot used for cooking pasta, heat remaining oil over medium heat; blend in flour. Add garlic and milk; cook, whisking constantly, until mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in nutmeg and black pepper. Remove from heat. Add Cheddar cheese and stir until blended. Add pasta, chicken and vegetables to sauce; stir until combined. Serve sprinkled with Parmesan cheese.

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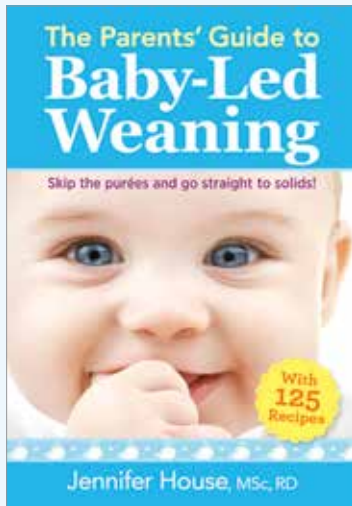
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer House, MSc, RD, has been a registered dietitian for over 12 years and offers in-person and online programs that help her clients make the right choices for a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle. She is also co-chair of Calgary Breastfeeding Matters Group. As a mother of three, she can relate to the many benefits and joys of baby-led weaning. She has launched a very successful baby weaning e-course.

The Parents' Guide to Baby-Led Weaning

Answers all the “whys” and “hows” when it comes to embarking on the exciting (and sometimes challenging) journey of baby-led weaning

- Baby-led weaning typically means starting your baby on real table food at approximately 6 months (usually with simple finger foods), skipping the purée stage completely
- Babies are able to eat a selection of really nutritious finger foods like banana, egg yolk, meat, poultry and the ever-popular avocado
- Babies feel like they're truly joining in on the family meals, and because they're so keen to mimic their parents and siblings, they typically take to it right away
- Baby-led weaning encourages enhanced motor skills at an earlier age and often leads to healthier eating habits — and, let's be honest, the whole process is just so much easier and fun for parents and baby alike!

Publicity

Robert Rose will launch a highly targeted marketing and publicity campaign across North American platforms, including regional and national print, radio, TV and online media.

- 5,166 Family/Parenting writers/reviewers
- 4,560 Lifestyle/Healthy Living writers/reviewers
- 1,357 Women's Interest writers/reviewers
- 1,576 Personal Health & Wellness writers/reviewers
- 215 Non-Fiction + News/Features + New Product writers/reviewers

Extensive online and social media marketing and promotion on:

- firststepnutrition.com + social media pages including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube
- robertrose.ca + social media pages including Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram

Jennifer addresses all the questions hesitant parents may have, offering sage advice on choking concerns, when your baby is ready to begin, how to ensure that your baby gets enough of all the important nutrients, how to deal with the frustration of “defending” baby-led weaning to family and friends, how to cope with food allergies, advice for vegetarian families and so much more