



Weaning



Weaning or complementary feeding is introducing your infant to foods other than breast milk or formula. This process is gradual; it is a personal decision of the mother to choose when to wean. The things influencing it are primarily, the infant's health, mother returning back to work or just the feeling that the time is right.

Weaning is important once your infant is six months of age. You can continue this with breastfeeding to help meet the growing requirements of your growing infant. Infants develop at this stage of life in a manner that is incomparable to later stages of life. Your baby, who weighs around 3 kg at birth, doubles in weight when he/she turns six months. This happens because of the rapid growth of organs of the body both structurally and functionally during the early stages of life. To meet the rapid growth and development requirements of the baby, there is an increased nutritional demand. Therefore, you must switch to complementary feeding.

Signs that your baby may be weaning

Certain children are content with being breastfed; however, others will give their mothers certain clues that they are ready to begin the process of weaning.

Such signs include:

- Being fussy while feeding, i.e. no interest in nursing
- Shorter sessions of nursing than before
- Nursing just for comfort
- Not taking breastfeed seriously and constantly playing at it



How do I wean my baby?

- 1) The weaning process should be gradual, i.e., it should last over several weeks, months or even longer. A sudden abrupt wean should only be considered under extreme conditions.
- 2) You can start by substituting one feed at a time and then move on substituting more as the child adapts.
- 3) Take the help of your partner or your family to offer a feed such that the baby easily accepts it. You can begin with liquid-like milk in a bottle with a rubber nipple.
- 4) You should try to understand what your baby is feeling and act as per their preferences.
- 5) Ensure that your baby is comfortable before the feed. You can either hold them or cuddle them, which can help them accept the feed.
- 6) Ensure you do not prop the bottle at the start because it can increase the risk of choking and cause tooth-related problems in childhood.

How do I know if my child is not ready to wean?

When you start the weaning process, and it is going too quickly for the child, he/she will let you know about it through his/her behaviour. The signs which they show to indicate this may include increased anxiety, increased tantrums, and clinginess. When your child is ill and teething, please remember to take a break because it may interfere with weaning and make it irritating for your child. If your child is old enough to understand, you can explain to them when you feel it is time to wean. Weaning is a difficult time for both mother and child; therefore, constant monitoring of the child and awareness is required.

First foods for the baby

- **Cereals:** The food most suited for your baby must include staple cereals. You can make porridge with suji (semolina), atta (wheat flour), and rice flour using some water or milk. Adding sugar or jaggery and ghee is important because it increases the energy value of the food. You can make the consistency of the porridge a little thinner initially but as the child grows, the texture has to be thicker.
- **Fruits:** You can give fruits such as papaya, banana, chikoo, and mango in a mashed form.
- When the child can digest porridge, you can give well-mixed foods such as cereals, pulses and vegetables to the child. The most common food given in the different parts of the country to infants is khichdi, dalia, suji kheer, upma, idli, dhokla and rice dal. Khichdi can be made more nutritious by adding one or two vegetables.
- **Instant infant food:** You can make instant food mixes at home available from household food grains such as rice, ragi, moong, and chana. These items must be separately roasted, ground well and stored in airtight containers. You can take two tablespoons of infant food mix, add boiled water or milk, top it off with oil or ghee and mix well.
- **Protective food:** Essential: Milk, curd, egg, fish, fruits, vegetables
Green leafy vegetables, carrots, pumpkin and seasonal fruits such as mango and banana help provide essential vitamins and minerals to the child.

Frequency of feeding

In the beginning, your baby must be fed at least 5–6 times a day, in addition to breastfeeding.

Remember, the first two years of an infant's life are the most important years of growth; hence, during this phase, you must provide essential nutrients and proteins to your child.





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This is general information issued in public interest.
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