

Abacus Nursery - Weaning Factsheet

At Abacus we view our mealtimes as a hugely important part of the day, they are very sociable and enjoyable. We have an onsite cook who prepares healthy, balanced meals with different tastes and textures for your little one to enjoy. The following (we hope) will help you through the weaning process but if at any point you have any concerns about weaning or diet/nutrition please get in touch and we will be happy to support you.

Introducing your child to solid foods is often referred to as weaning. It is important that you follow the advice of your health visitor and the NHS guidelines, as these provide the most current up-to date information. The Department of Health (DH) continues to carry out research and studies around infant feeding and weaning, which can result in the guidelines changing. The current guidelines (as of December 2019) recommend that you start the weaning process when your baby is around six months old.

The NHS website shares three signs that may mean your child is ready for solids. They'll be able to:

- Stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady
- Co-ordinate their eyes, hands and mouth so they can look at the food, pick it up and put it in their mouth by themselves
- Swallow food (rather than spit it back out).

The website also shares common signs that can be mistaken for a baby being ready for solid foods:

- Chewing fists
- Waking in the night when they have previously slept through
- Wanting extra milk feeds.

These are normal behaviours and not necessarily a sign of hunger, or a sign of being ready to start solid food. Starting solid foods won't make them any more likely to sleep through the night. Extra feeds are usually enough until they're ready for other food.

Meal times should be happy, social times where early social skills such as feeding themselves are encouraged, both at home and in the nursery. Babies and young children may take their time eating, as they are exploring new textures, tastes and smells and this takes time. You should allow time for this and allow your child to explore the different foods you are offering them. This is how they decide what food and flavours they prefer.

The NHS guidelines provide lots of information about the types of food you should try when starting to feed your baby solids. This is broken down into the different age groups. There are some examples below: From 6 months:

- Mashed or soft cooked fruit and vegetables like parsnip, potato, yam, sweet potato, carrot, apple or pear, all cooled before eating, or soft fruit like peach, melon, soft ripe banana or avocado as finger foods or mashed.
- Baby rice or baby cereal mixed with your baby's usual milk

- Keep feeding them breast milk or infant formula as well but don't give them whole cows' milk as a drink until they are a year old. From 12 months:
- Your baby will now be eating three meals a day, chopped if required, plus breast milk or whole cows' milk and healthier snacks like fruit, vegetable sticks, toast and rice cakes
- They can now drink whole cows' milk. Choose full-fat dairy products because children under two need the extra fat and vitamins found in them. From two years old if they are a good eater and growing well they can have semi-skimmed milk. From five years old 1% fat and skimmed milk is OK.

You can give your baby:

Three to four servings a day of starchy food such as potatoes, bread and rice

Three to four servings a day of fruit and vegetables

Two servings a day of meat, fish, eggs, dhal or other pulses (beans and lentils)

Please remember to get in touch if you require further support 😊