

# BALLESTRINI'S EARLY LEARNING CENTER

## Family Connection

Introducing Solids: A Guide to Your Baby's First Foods



**This Issue will cover Signs of Readiness, Safe Food Choices, and Tips for a Smooth Transition.**

Introducing solid foods is an exciting milestone in your baby's development! While every child is different, most babies are ready for solids around **six months of age**. Watching for **developmental readiness signs** and offering **age-appropriate foods** can make this transition smoother and safer.

### Tips for a Smooth Start to Solids

- ✓ Start with small amounts (1-2 teaspoons) and increase gradually
- ✓ Serve solids when baby is well-rested and happy, not overly tired or hungry
- ✓ Feed with a small spoon or let baby self-feed (if baby-led weaning)
- ✓ Expect mess! Learning to eat is a sensory experience



**"Food before one is just for fun!"**

– A gentle reminder that solids are about learning, not replacing milk immediately.

### Signs of Readiness

Before introducing solids, look for these developmental milestones:

- ✓ **Head and neck control** – Baby can hold their head up and control neck movements, essential for safe swallowing.
- ✓ **Sits upright** – Can sit with little to no support, reducing the risk of choking.
- ✓ **Brings objects to their mouth** – Shows the ability to pick up food and attempt self-feeding.
- ✓ **Shows interest in food** – Watches you eat, reaches for food, or opens their mouth when food is near.
- ✓ **Makes chewing motions** – Demonstrates correct jaw and tongue movements for eating.
- ✓ **Swallows food** – Loses the tongue-thrust reflex, allowing food to be swallowed rather than pushed out.
- ✓ **Opens mouth for a spoon** – Closes lips around the spoon and swallows smoothly.

These **signs indicate your baby is ready** to start their solid food journey!

### Signs That a Baby is NOT Ready for Solids

What signs indicate a baby is NOT ready for solids:

- ✗ Poor head/neck control
- ✗ Still has the tongue-thrust reflex (pushes food out)
- ✗ Unable to sit upright with support
- ✗ Lack of interest in food

# Top 9 Allergens & Safe Introduction

Early exposure to allergens can help prevent allergies. The most common food allergens include:

- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Soybeans
- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Peanuts
- ✓ Wheat
- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Sesame Seeds.
- ✓ Crustacean Shellfish (shrimp, lobster)
- ✓ Tree Nuts (almonds, walnuts)

## Tips for Introducing Allergens:

- ✓ Introduce allergens **one at a time** and wait **3-4 days** before offering another.
- ✓ Serve allergens **2-3 times per week** to help reduce the risk of allergy development.
- ✓ Observe for signs of an allergic reaction, such as: **hives, swelling, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, or difficulty breathing.**
- ✓ If you notice **severe reactions** (swelling, breathing difficulties), seek **emergency medical attention immediately.**
- ✓ Always consult your **pediatrician** before introducing allergens, especially if there is a family history of food allergies.

## Foods to Avoid in the First Year

A list of foods that are **not recommended before 12 months** to ensure safety, such as:

- ✗ Honey (risk of botulism)
- ✗ Whole nuts (choking hazard)
- ✗ Added salt and sugar in foods
- ✗ Cow's milk as a primary drink (okay in small amounts in food, but not as a replacement for breastmilk/formula)

## Weaning from the Bottle

Aim to be completely off the bottle by **12-14 months**. Here's how to make the transition easier:



- ✓ Introduce a cup with water at each meal starting at 6 months.
- ✓ Ensure your child gets a well-balanced diet from all food groups.
- ✓ Eliminate one bottle at a time, beginning with midday bottles.
- ✓ Limit whole milk to 16-20 oz per day (less if consuming other dairy sources). Too much calcium can block iron absorption.
- ✓ Increase meal portion sizes to make up for lost bottle calories—formula and breast milk provide ~20 calories per ounce.
- ✓ Offer water frequently—toddlers need about 4 cups of fluids per day.
- ✓ If baby refuses milk, don't worry! Calcium, vitamin D, and healthy fats can come from yogurt, cheese, and other dairy sources.
- ✓ Avoid juice and sugary drinks—water and milk are best!

## NOT ALL CUPS ARE CREATED EQUAL!

STRAW CUPS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR PROPER ORAL DEVELOPMENT. THEY PROMOTE SAFE EATING HABITS, REDUCE PICKY EATING, AND SUPPORT EARLY SPEECH ARTICULATION.

 **RECOMMENDED STRAW CUP: [CLICK HERE](#) FOR A SPILL-PROOF, EASY-TO-CLEAN STRAW CUP THAT ENCOURAGES INFANTS TO LEARN INDEPENDENT DRINKING**



**WHY WE SHOULD Skip the Sippy Cup!**

- CHANGES THE SWALLOW PATTERN TO A LESS MATURE SWALLOW
- ENCOURAGES A FORWARD RESTING TONGUE POSITION, OR TONGUE THRUST
- ENCOURAGES OPEN MOUTH POSTURE AT REST
- IMPACTS SPEECH SOUND DEVELOPMENT DUE TO A TONGUE THRUST
- IMPACTS TEETH DEVELOPMENT AND REDUCES APPETITE CUES

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## Choking vs. Gagging: Understanding the Difference

When introducing solids, many parents worry about choking, but gagging is a normal and necessary part of learning to eat. Understanding the difference can help ease concerns and ensure a safe eating experience for your baby.

- ✓ Gagging is a natural reflex that helps prevent choking. It often happens when babies are learning to move food around in their mouths. You might notice coughing, gagging sounds, or a red face, but your baby will usually resolve it on their own.
- ✗ Choking is when a piece of food completely blocks the airway, preventing breathing. Signs of choking include silence (no coughing or noise), difficulty breathing, or a blue face. This is an emergency—act immediately with back blows and chest thrusts.

### How to Reduce the Risk:

- ✓ Always offer age-appropriate food textures.
- ✓ Avoid high-risk foods (whole nuts, popcorn, and grapes).
- ✓ Encourage babies to sit upright while eating.
- ✓ Cut food into safe sizes (e.g., thin strips instead of chunks).
- ✓ Supervise all meals

Understanding these signs helps build confidence as your baby explores solid foods safely

## Traditional Feeding vs. Baby-Led Weaning: Pros & Cons

When introducing solids, parents can choose between **traditional spoon-feeding** and **baby-led weaning (BLW)**, or use a combination of both. Each approach has benefits and challenges:

### Traditional Spoon-Feeding

- ✓ Provides controlled portions and gradual texture transitions.
- ✓ Allows for easy tracking of food intake.
- ✓ Ideal for babies who prefer smoother textures.
- ✗ Requires parents to actively feed, limiting baby's independence.
- ✗ May result in a delayed acceptance of textured foods.

### Baby-Led Weaning (BLW)

- ✓ Encourages self-feeding and fine motor skill development.
- ✓ Helps babies learn to manage different textures early.
- ✓ Allows baby to eat at their own pace and follow hunger cues.
- ✗ Higher risk of gagging if not introduced correctly.
- ✗ Can be messier and require more patience from caregivers.

A **balanced approach** using both methods can help babies explore different textures while ensuring nutritional intake. Parents should choose what works best for their baby's needs and comfort level.

## Age-Appropriate Foods for Introducing Solids

Age	Traditional Foods (Purees, Mashed)	Baby-Led Weaning Foods (Soft Finger Foods)
6-8 months	Single-ingredient purees (avocado, banana, sweet potato, applesauce, peas)	Large soft pieces (avocado slices, banana spears, cooked sweet potato sticks)
	Thicker purees, mashed foods (mashed beans, yogurt, oatmeal, mashed potatoes)	Soft strips or chunks (ripe peaches, roasted zucchini, soft-cooked carrots, scrambled eggs)
8-10 months	Soft chopped foods (scrambled eggs, soft pasta, small fruit and veggie pieces)	Softer bite-sized pieces (strawberries, cooked pasta, ground meat, steamed broccoli)
10-12 months	More textured foods (finely chopped meats, shredded cheese, soft bread)	More variety of textures (shredded chicken, small toast pieces, soft cooked beans)

INTRODUCING SOLIDS IS A BIG STEP IN YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPMENT, AND PATIENCE IS KEY. LET YOUR CHILD EXPLORE DIFFERENT TEXTURES, FLAVORS, AND FEEDING METHODS AT THEIR OWN PACE. CELEBRATE SMALL WINS, AND REMEMBER THAT EVERY BABY PROGRESSES DIFFERENTLY!

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS, OUR TEAM AT BALLESTRINI'S EARLY LEARNING CENTER IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU! FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT FOR GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES.