

Baby-Led Weaning on a Budget

Baby-led weaning can be a great way to introduce solids to your baby since it promotes using many family foods. Feeding your baby the same foods you eat as a family can help to reduce food waste and save money and time for food preparation.

Tips for baby-led weaning:

- Avoiding food waste can be helpful towards minimizing the cost of feeding your family. For this reason, try to avoid buying baby-specific foods that only your baby can eat.
- When offering your baby foods, focus on foods that you are eating as a family. Babies can safely eat seasoned food; and can tolerate a small amount of salt, but if you are cooking for your family and baby, try to remove your babies' portion before you add salt.
- Babies and toddlers can safely eat leftover food. Always check with your pediatrician in case your child is immune-compromised. If you have freshly prepared food that you will not offer to your child in the next few days, it is best to freeze it for a later time. These storage guidelines are for freshly prepared foods.

Storage guidelines for babies and toddlers:

TYPE OF FOOD	REFRIGERATOR
LEFTOVERS	
Cooked meat	3-4 days
Cooked fish	2-3 days
Cooked eggs (includes pancakes)	4 days
Cooked poultry	3-4 days
Soups and stews	3-4 days
Grains like quinoa, farro, pasta, oats	5 days
Cooked vegetables	5 days
Cooked fruits	5 days
Cooked beans	5 days

Tips for baby-led weaning:

- Many pantry foods can be great for feeding babies. These include smooth peanut or almond butter, canned sardines or salmon (boneless), applesauce, canned beans like chickpeas and kidney beans, oatmeal, pasta, and quinoa.
- When choosing canned foods for your family try to choose low sodium options.
- Frozen fruits and vegetables are also a great choice when feeding your family. Frozen fruits and vegetables are typically harvested at the peak of their ripeness and retain their nutrition. Frozen fruits and vegetables are already washed, cut, and prepped so they can be a really convenient way to feed your family.
- Try to be realistic with your portions when first feeding your baby. Babies typically learning to eat solids don't eat huge portions of food. When first starting solids, aim to offer 1-2 tablespoons worth of food. If your child shows interest, then you can offer more.
- Modeling your child's meals after your own family's meals can help to reduce food waste, but also teach your baby how to eat the foods of your family.
- Try to keep meals simple. When first introducing solids, one meal a day is more than enough. Offering one to two options per meal also suffices.
- Simple meals for babies include yogurt with fruit, oatmeal with peanut butter, pieces of fruit with a thin smear of smooth peanut butter, a piece of toast with peanut butter, and chickpeas with tomato sauce.
- It can take 15-25 exposures of a certain food until your child accepts to eat the food.
- When offering foods to your baby, try to offer the food in a way that is easy for them to eat. Babies 6-9 months only have a palmar grasp, meaning that they can only pick up foods with the palms of their hands. For this reason, it is best to offer foods in thin long strips (as long and thin as your pinky finger) that are easier for your baby to pick up with the palms of their hands.



- If your baby is older than 9 months, then they are likely developing a pincer grasp. Meaning that they can pick up smaller pieces of food using their thumb and index finger. You can begin to offer smaller pieces of food to your baby, about 1-2 inches by 1-2 inches.
- Whether your baby is using their palmar or pincer grasp, it is best to do a squish test to make sure the texture is safe for your baby. To do this, put the food between your index finger and thumb to see if it easily squishes.
- When offering foods to your baby, you will want to make sure you are avoiding any choking hazards like whole hard nuts, soft gummy bread, raw whole carrots, grapes, and apples.



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