

Healthy Living

Under 2s: Baby Led Weaning - What best practice looks like



Baby-led Weaning (BLW) is simply introducing solids into a baby's diet in a baby-led way. This means babies lead when the weaning begins (usually around six months of age), control their own food intake, and feed themselves finger foods from the very start of weaning, skipping the spoon-fed purée stage entirely.

It has many benefits including, it may lower the risk of obesity, gives exposure to a variety of foods, encourages the development of fine motor skills, reduces parental mealtimes stress, increases favourable feeding practices, and saves time and money.

It is important to ensure that the setting understands BLW and has the strategies, policies, and procedures to support it. Staff should have knowledge of safety, nutrition, variety and food groups, equipment, and parental support, when it comes to baby led weaning and know what best practice looks like.

TASK 1

Nutrition, variety, and food groups:

Breast milk or first infant formula provides everything that babies need for healthy development for the first 6 months. When babies are around 6 months old, they start to need solid foods as well as

breast milk or first infant formula to meet their nutritional needs. Use the links below to familiarise yourself with the national recommendations around BLW, nutrition and examples of what you may feed a child under one.

Review your current practice and make recommendations for improvement.

[What to feed around 6 months - Start for Life - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/what-to-feed-around-6-months-start-for-life)

[Weaning - Start for Life - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/weaning-start-for-life)

TASK 2

Safety-

The stage of BLW can be very anxiety driven for all involved whilst a child is learning its new skill. Use the links below to help with supporting this stage as safely as possible.

Before starting this stage, a baby should 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.)

[Choking and gagging on food - Start for Life - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/choking-and-gagging-on-food-start-for-life)

[Safe weaning - Start for Life - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/safe-weaning-start-for-life)

[Help for early years providers : Food safety \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.education.gov.uk/food-safety)

TASK 3

Adapting your menu and equipment:

This stage can be messy so having the right equipment is essential. It is also important to be creative and flexible with meals and snacks, offering variety and meeting children's needs. Use the links below to help you prepare for BLW and reflect on the current food that you offer.

[Recipes and meal ideas - Start for Life - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[Start for Life - YouTube](#)

TASK 4

Food safety weaning policy:

- Do you have a weaning policy?
- Does it support the NHS guidance above? Do you make reference to it?
- Do staff have a clear understanding of the guidance and policy, how do you know?
- Do parents understand this guidance and policy, how do you know?
- Does your policy and procedures include some of the heading above?

TASK 5

Parents support:

- How do you advise, support parents?
- How do you work in partnerships?
- How could you use the resources above to support a parent's journey to BLW?
- How do you promote baby lead weaning? Could you do more in your setting?
- Do you work with parents to review your policies and procedures in this area?

You might find it useful to explore the other Q cards around healthy eating in our Health living section: