



STARTING BABY-LED WEANING

— THE BIG —

BLW

COOKBOOK

**70+ Easy & Healthy Recipes for
Confident Self-Feeding**

Learning to Eat with Joy & Trust – Family-
Friendly BLW Recipes from 6 Months On

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INTRODUCTION



Baby-Led Weaning (BLW) is a revolutionary approach to introducing solids to your baby, putting them in the driver's seat of their own eating journey. Instead of spoon-feeding purées, BLW encourages babies to explore whole, finger foods from the start, allowing them to feed themselves at their own pace. This method fosters independence, fine motor skills, and the development of a healthy relationship with food.

Why Go Purée-Free? Benefits for Baby & Parents

Going purée-free offers significant advantages for both baby and parents. For babies, BLW promotes better oral development, as they learn to chew and manipulate food with their gums from the outset. It also enhances hand-eye coordination and dexterity, as babies practice picking up food and bringing it to their mouths. Parents benefit too, as BLW can save time and money – there's no need for prepping, blending, or storing baby food. Additionally, it promotes family mealtimes where everyone eats the same food, making mealtime an enjoyable and shared experience.

When Is My Baby Ready to Start?

Babies are generally ready to start BLW around 6 months of age when they can sit up unassisted, show interest in food, and have lost the tongue-thrust reflex (which helps them push food out of their mouth). It's essential to ensure that your baby is developmentally ready to handle solid foods, not just physically, but also emotionally, as they begin to explore the textures and flavors of real food.

Safety at Mealtime: Choking vs. Gagging

Safety is paramount when introducing solids. Understanding the difference between gagging and choking is crucial. Gagging is a normal reflex that helps babies move food to the front of their mouth, and it often sounds alarming, but it's not dangerous. Choking, however, is a serious emergency, so it's important to supervise mealtimes and offer age-appropriate foods that are safe for your baby to handle.

First Steps: How to Start Successfully

The first steps of BLW can be exciting but should be approached with confidence and patience. Start with simple, soft foods that are easy for your baby to grip, such as steamed vegetables or ripe fruit slices. Let your baby explore the food at their own pace, without pressure, and always stay close to offer support and guidance. Over time, your baby will learn how to chew and swallow, helping them transition smoothly to a wide variety of textures and flavors. The key is to embrace the mess, trust the process, and enjoy watching your baby discover the joys of eating!



CHAPTER 1

FOUNDATIONS OF PURÉE-FREE WEANING

Key Nutrients: What Babies Need

As you embark on the journey of purée-free weaning, it's crucial to ensure your baby receives all the essential nutrients for healthy growth and development. At this stage, babies need a balanced mix of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals. Key nutrients include:

- **Iron:** Critical for brain development and energy. Iron-rich foods like pureed meats, leafy greens, and fortified cereals are great choices.
- **Healthy fats:** Vital for brain development and cell growth. Avocados, nut butters, and full-fat dairy are ideal sources.
- **Proteins:** Necessary for growth and development. Chicken, fish, beans, and tofu are excellent options.
- **Fiber:** Supports healthy digestion. Offer soft fruits, vegetables, and grains to keep things moving.

Make sure to introduce a variety of these nutrients, keeping in mind the textures and tastes that your baby can safely manage.

Suitable Foods – What's Allowed and What's Not

When starting Baby-Led Weaning (BLW), choosing the right foods is crucial to ensure safety and nutritional value. Here are some guidelines:

Foods that are suitable:

- **Soft fruits:** Bananas, avocados, peaches, and pears, cut into manageable pieces.

- **Cooked vegetables:** Sweet potatoes, carrots, and zucchini, steamed or roasted until soft.
- **Proteins:** Tender meats (chicken, turkey), fish (like salmon), eggs, and beans (mashed or cut into safe pieces).
- **Grains:** Oatmeal, brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat toast.



Foods to avoid:

- **Hard, choking hazards:** Raw vegetables, whole nuts, popcorn, and hard candy should be avoided.
- **Honey:** Never give honey to babies under one year due to the risk of botulism.
- **Added salt and sugar:** Babies don't need added salt or sugar in their foods at this stage, so it's best to avoid processed or salty foods.

By choosing age-appropriate foods, you'll ensure that mealtimes are both safe and nutritious for your little one.

Kitchen Tools & Prep Tips

Having the right tools can make purée-free weaning a lot easier and more enjoyable. Here are some essentials:

- **High chair:** A sturdy, safe high chair is essential for BLW, giving your baby a comfortable and secure seat during mealtimes.
- **Baby-friendly utensils:** Simple tools like soft-tip spoons, baby forks, or a silicone bib will help prevent messes and encourage self-feeding.
- **Blender or food processor:** Although puréeing is not the focus of BLW, a blender or food processor can help you prepare the base for smoothies, sauces, or soft foods that can be introduced later in the process.

- **Steamer or slow cooker:** These are great for softening foods, ensuring they're easy for your baby to gum and chew safely

Prep tips:

- **Cut food into manageable pieces:** Offer food in strips, sticks, or small chunks that are easy for your baby to grasp.
- **Ensure food is soft and easy to mash:** Foods should be soft enough that they can be easily mashed between your baby's gums.
- **Supervise closely:** Always stay within arm's reach of your baby to ensure safety, especially as they learn to handle different textures.

Integrating Meals into Everyday Family Life

One of the main benefits of Baby-Led Weaning is that it allows your baby to join in on family mealtimes right from the start. This integration fosters a positive relationship with food and strengthens family bonds.

- **Eat together:** Try to have meals as a family whenever possible. This helps your baby observe healthy eating habits and enjoy the social aspect of mealtime.
- **Meal planning:** Include baby-friendly foods in your family's meals. If you're having roasted vegetables, for example, share some soft pieces with your baby. If you're cooking meat, make sure it's tender and cut into safe pieces for baby.
- **Patience is key:** While your baby is learning to self-feed, expect some mess! Let your baby explore food at their own pace without pressure. Remember, the goal is not only nutrition but also learning through play and exploration.