



Baby Led Feeding

IMAGINE completely skipping the classic airplane spoon and sounds while trying to entice baby to open her mouth for a bite of mush. Instead, picture feeding foods right from the family table, including soft fruits and veggies, meats, fish, scrambled eggs or whole grains, that baby can pick up and eat all by herself.

Baby led feeding (or weaning) is based on starting babies off with finger foods and allowing them to explore the taste, color, texture and smell of a variety of foods at their own pace. Allowing babies to choose what and how much to eat follows Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility, by encouraging them to set the pace while helping to foster independence, fine tune motor development and build healthy eating habits. One key component of baby led feeding is to prevent overfeeding; babies start to learn self-regulation and to stop eating when full from a young age. If a baby is self-feeding they will not over eat because they naturally stop when they are done. Conversely, when we spoon feed babies we often try to get them to eat *just one more bite*. This teaches babies to eat beyond their natural stopping point, a behavior that can lead to ignoring body cues and overeating. Allowing baby to be in charge of eating can have positive,



long lasting benefits on eating habits, food preferences and relationships to food. Bonus, no need to buy jars of food or spend time pureeing! Note this style of feeding may not be advised for premature babies or those with developmental delays or congenital deformities such as cleft palate. Always check with a pediatrician for what is best for your baby.

READINESS FOR SOLID FOODS

Baby is typically ready to start eating solid food around 6 months of age, but rather than looking at a calendar, look at your baby.

- Can he sit up and hold his head unsupported?
- Is he showing interest in food, developmental readiness in grasping and mouthing?
- Is he able to move food to the back of his mouth and swallow?

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Farmer Fran's Fun Facts




Zucchini

- Native Americans introduced squash to European settlers as one of the "Three Sisters"—three indigenous plants used for agriculture: maize (corn), beans and squash.
- Zucchini is the most common variety of summer squash. Other varieties include: patty pan, crookneck, sunburst, yellow, chayote and opo. All summer squash are completely edible, both raw and cooked. The fruit grows from the base of the female flower on a short stem. Once fruit is set, zucchini can grow up to 1 inch per day.
- Sauté chopped zucchini, onions and bell peppers to add to chicken enchiladas. Use shredded zucchini to make zucchini bread or add to pancakes. Dip raw zucchini slices into low-fat salad dressing for a light summer snack.
- Choose zucchini that have smooth, shiny skin and feel heavy for their size. Store zucchini in a plastic bag in the refrigerator up to one week.
- Zucchini is a good source of vitamin C and provides manganese, a mineral involved in the formation of bone and connective tissue, important for growing children.

Baby Led Feeding

— Continued from front page

If the answer is yes, you are ready to begin! If not, no need to worry, just wait a bit longer and try again. All babies develop at their own pace.

It is important to remember that babies will still receive the majority of their calories and nutrients from breastmilk or formula. Babies most likely will not consume much table food for quite awhile, this is an exploration process and first foods are not meant to replace breastmilk or formula.

INTRODUCING FIRST FOODS

Starting with single ingredient first foods is a good idea so you can watch closely for any reaction or allergy. Cut soft foods into long strips for baby to pick up and grab since the pincer grasp doesn't develop until around 8 or 9 months. Remember texture is key, foods should be soft enough to smash between your thumb and forefinger for the novice, often toothless eater. Good options are bananas, sliced avocado and cooked sweet potato wedges. Eventually you can graduate to smaller foods like peas and beans when her pincer grasp is more refined. To begin, try when baby has already nursed or had a bottle and is not overly hungry. This will be a more pleasant, less frustrating experience for all. Offer just a few bites of food on her tray so baby is not overwhelmed with choices.

There is nothing wrong with a hybrid approach of spoon feeding as well as finger foods, the key is to allow baby to be in charge. Another option is to try a preloaded spoon of hummus, yogurt or baby cereal placed on the tray for her to pick up and attempt her coordination. Don't be alarmed if you see more food on the baby and floor than in her mouth, learning is messy! Embrace the mess, it is all part of the process.

CHOKING CONCERNS

You may be surprised to learn that most babies are naturals at managing finger foods (they already put everything in their mouths!) What may seem to you like choking could instead be gagging, a baby's natural reflex to get rid of challenging foods. Watery eyes, coughing and sputtering are to be expected in this new eating exploration; relax and allow baby to get the food out on her own.



If she sees you frightened, she too will get scared and may be a less adventurous eater. On the other hand, choking is silent. As a precaution, brush up on infant abdominal thrusts, always stay present and vigilant with baby while he eats and make sure he is seated upright. Avoid classic choking hazards in round shapes like hot dogs, grapes and raisins. It is also best to stay away from sticky foods like nut butters and hard, raw vegetables.

Baby led feeding has many strengths and reasons to give it a try. Many caregivers and babies, enjoy the freedom from spoon feeding and the pleasure of sharing family meals together. Most importantly, pay attention to baby's cues of readiness, interest, hunger and fullness regardless which method you choose and you will foster lifelong healthy eating habits.

— Rachel O'Neal
Child Health and Nutrition Specialist

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Screen Time and Eye Health

AUGUST IS CHILDREN'S EYE HEALTH MONTH and as children spend more time tethered to screens, there is increasing concern about potential harm to their visual development. Ophthalmologists are seeing a marked increase in children with dry eye and eye strain. Does digital eyestrain cause lasting damage? Should children use reading glasses or computer glasses? As kids get back to school this month for even more time with screens and books, learn the facts about children's eye health.



It's a fact that there is a world-wide epidemic of myopia, also known as nearsightedness. Since 1971, the incidence of nearsightedness in the U.S. nearly doubled, to 42 percent. In Asia, up to 90 percent of teenagers and adults are nearsighted. Clearly, something is going on, but scientists can't agree on exactly what.

A new study appearing in the *Journal of the American Academy of Ophthalmology* offers further evidence that at least part of the worldwide increase in nearsightedness has to do with looking at objects up close, such as screens. And, that spending time outdoors, especially in early childhood, can slow the progression of nearsightedness. It remains unclear whether the rise in nearsightedness is due to focusing on cell phones or to light interacting with our circadian rhythms to influence eye growth.

While scientists look for a definitive answer, there is no doubt that most computer users experience digital eyestrain. Kids are no different from adults when it comes to digital eyestrain. They can experience dry eye, headaches and blurry vision, too. While symptoms are typically temporary, they may be frequent and persistent.

This doesn't mean children need a prescription for computer glasses or that they have developed an eye condition typical of middle-age that requires reading glasses. It also doesn't mean that blue light coming from computer screens is damaging their eyes. It does mean they need to take more frequent breaks. This is because we don't blink

as often while using computers and other digital devices. Extended reading, writing or other intensive near work can also cause eye strain. Ophthalmologists recommend taking a 20 second break from near work every 20 minutes.

Here are 10 tips to help protect children's eyes from computer eyestrain:

- Set a timer to remind children to take breaks from screens.
- Alternate reading an e-book with a real book and remind children to look up every couple of chapters.
- After completing a level in a video game, look out the window for 20 seconds.
- Avoid using a computer outside or in brightly lit areas, as the glare on the screen can create strain.
- Adjust the brightness and contrast of your computer screen so that it feels comfortable.
- Use good posture when using a computer and when reading.
- Encourage children to hold digital media farther away, 18–24 inches is ideal.
- Create a distraction that causes children to look up every now and then.
- Remind children to blink when watching a screen.

"I prefer to teach kids better habits, instead of supplying them a crutch like reading glasses to enable them to consume even more media," said K. David Epley, M.D., clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. "If you run too far and your legs hurt, stop. Likewise, if you watch videos too long and your eyes start to hurt, stop."

— *Adapted from the American Academy of Ophthalmology*

Parmesan Summer Squash Bites

Summer squash, zucchini, yellow or patty pan 2 medium
 Garlic salt or powder to taste
 Parmesan cheese, shaved 1 cup

1. Place oven rack in the center of the oven. Preheat oven to 425°F. Cover a baking sheet with foil and spray with cooking oil spray.
2. Wash and dry summer squash and cut into ¼ inch thick slices. Arrange on baking sheet placing them close together. Sprinkle lightly with garlic salt. Use a small spoon to place a layer of cheese on each slice.
3. Bake for 15–18 minutes, just until cheese is melted and golden brown.

Yield: 4 servings

Meets requirement for vegetable

— *FiveHeartHome.com*

Lentil Tacos with Summer Squash

Onions, chopped 1 cup
 Garlic clove, minced 2
 Lentils, brown or green 1 cup
 Broth, vegetable or chicken 2 cups
 Taco seasoning 1½ Tbsp
 Squash, zucchini or yellow 4
 Olive Oil 2 Tbsp
 Salt, pepper and taco seasoning to taste
 Corn tortilla, whole corn 8
 Fresh salsa 1½ cup
 Queso fresco or cheddar cheese 4 ounces
 Avocado, diced or sliced 1 cup

1. Place onion and garlic in slow cooker. Rinse and pick over lentils, then place in slow cooker. Mix in broth and taco seasoning, cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until tender. Mash lentils slightly with a fork.
2. Dice squash into medium cubes. Heat olive oil and sauté squash just until crisp tender. Season with salt, pepper and taco seasoning to taste.
3. Heat corn tortillas over gas flame or in a dry pan. Spoon lentil mixture onto tortillas and top with squash, salsa, cheese and avocado. Serve as a taco or tostada.

Yield: 8 servings

Meets requirement for meat/meat alternate, vegetable and whole grain-rich

— *Adapted from New York Times Cooking*

Tomato and Zucchini Salsa

Tomatoes, chopped 1 cup
 Red bell pepper, chopped ½ cup
 Zucchini, chopped 1 cup
 Onion, chopped 1 small
 Garlic, minced 1 clove
 Jalapeno, minced (optional) ½
 Cumin ½ tsp
 Cilantro, chopped ¼ cup
 Lime juice 1½ Tbsp
 Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl and refrigerate.

Yield: 3 cups

Meets requirement for vegetable

ACTIVITY CORNER

Yoga Pose of the Month



SEATED TWIST

This pose helps stimulate digestion, calms stress and anxiety and improves spinal mobility.

- 1 Begin by sitting in the cross legged position, keeping your spine tall.
- 2 Place your left hand on your right knee and your right hand on the floor behind you. Inhale.
- 3 On an exhale, twist your body to the right, using your hand on your knee to help you go deeper in to the twist.
- 4 Look over your right shoulder and take 3-5 deep breaths.
- 5 Switch to the other side.

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Food Q. Why do watermelons have fancy weddings?
Funny A. Because they cantaloupe.