



## Finger Foods



### Offer From 6 Months

From 6 months of age your baby should be ready for finger food. You should offer fingers foods whether you are doing baby-led weaning or traditional purées. Fingers foods can be offered alongside purée.

Babies do not need teeth to be able to eat finger foods as their little gums are pretty hard and can bite through more than you may think.

Learning to eat finger foods can take time to get used to the different textures so go at your baby's pace. To start with your baby may play with the finger foods and not much may get eaten (in this case you'll need to offer purée and mush as well), but just keep calm and keep on offering them.

### The Importance of Finger Foods

Lumps and texture are important as they help with the development of muscles for speech and finger foods will help your baby become familiar with the texture and appearance of different foods. Offering finger foods also gives your baby some control over eating and helps with the development of motor skills and coordination. If your baby refuses finger foods, it's important to still offer increased texture from 6-7 months onwards and not rely on mush for too long. Plus keep on trying with finger foods.

## **Safe Finger Foods**

Ensure you offer soft ripe fruits and veggies to young babies.

Remove all skins, pips and stones and take care of stringy bits (for example on green beans).

With small round foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes ensure you cut them up small for babies and then lengthways once they are a bit older. The pincer grip develops at around 9-10 months so start by offering your baby bigger sticks of finger food before you give smaller foods.

Avoid chunks of hard apple, raw carrot, nuts and popcorn, as these are the foods that babies are most likely to choke on.

Always stay with your baby when they are eating.

If you are offering raw food make sure it is thoroughly washed.

## **No Added Salt/Sugar for Babies**

If you are offering veggies off your plate in a restaurant make sure they haven't added salt.

## **Progressing with Types of Finger Food**

Once babies have mastered soft veggies and fruits you can move onto soft cooked meats\* and fish\* (meatballs and fishcakes are handy here) and lentil\* or bean\* burgers, omelettes\* or hard boiled egg\* cut into strips and then carbohydrate-based finger foods like toast, oatcakes, pasta, noodles, chapatti, pitta bread, pancake fingers etc.

## **Iron-rich finger foods**



\*These foods are sources of iron that is important from 6 months and if your baby isn't eating these foods as finger foods it's important to give them puréed or chopped foods to suit your baby's needs but keep trying with the finger foods.

### **Tips:**

1. Keep some skin on for slippery fruits and veg. like banana and avocado to help your baby to grip (see photo) But stay close to ensure they don't eat the skin. You could also cut a groove into fingers of food to help your baby grip or make them crinkle cut using a crinkle cut slicer.
2. Offer finger foods about the size of an adult finger where possible (large enough for your baby to grip and for the food to stick up out of their hand to chew).



### **Soft Finger Foods to Try From 6 Months:**

#### **Vegetables are good first tastes to introduce to babies**

- Steamed broccoli/cauliflower florets
- Ripe avocado strips
- Cooked courgette sticks
- Steamed carrot/parsnip sticks
- Steamed green beans/mangetout/asparagus

## **Fruits**

Once babies have accepted savoury tastes, fruit can be introduced.

Cook fruits to soften them if necessary.

- Banana
- Mango
- Melon
- Kiwi
- Soften apple
- Ripe pear

## **Starchy foods**

- Sweet potato sticks roasted
- Potato cooked and cut into strips
- Pasta
- Toast or bread fingers
- Pancakes – could be made with Ready Brek (iron-fortified porridge)

## **Protein foods**

- Egg – hard boiled and cut into strips, or omelette cut into strips
- Meatballs
- Fishcakes
- Slow-cooked beef or lamb strips
- Mini lentil or bean burgers

## **Useful resources:**

1) Gagging video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRrbZuP-pjk>

2) First Steps Nutrition Trust:

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-infants-new-mums>

Eating well: the first year. A guide to introducing solids and eating well up to baby's first birthday. (2017)

3) Book: Baby Food Matters, Dr Clare Llewellyn & Dr Hayley Syrad (2018)

4) British Red Cross App