

## Choking Versus Gagging

Gagging is a reflex that helps infants clear foods from the back of their mouth, helps infants to avoid choking, and is often noisy.

Choking is when food gets stuck in the throat and blocks the airway. Choking is often silent. If your baby is choking, you need to call 911 and begin first aid.

When a child is alert, sitting up-right, and is free from distraction, and food has been modified appropriately, the chances of choking are greatly reduced.

# Feeding Baby

## 6 MONTHS AND OLDER



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Before 6 months of age, your baby only needs breast milk or an iron-fortified formula. Feeding solid food before 6 months of age may cause your baby to overeat, cause harm to the gut, cause diarrhea, and/or increase risk for iron deficiency.

Start solid foods at 6 months when your baby can sit up and hold their head up on their own (this is related to their ability to swallow). Other signs of readiness for solid food may include turning their head away to show that they are full or leaning forward with their mouth open to show they are interested in eating. If your baby reaches for food and tries to put it in their mouth or tries to feed themselves with fingers or a spoon, they may also be indicating that they are ready to eat solid foods.

The first foods offered should be foods high in iron, such as meat, eggs, fish, beans, and iron-fortified baby cereal.

### The Traditional Feeding Method

The traditional feeding method is when your baby is offered a variety of foods of different textures such as pureed, mashed, lumpy, ground, finely minced, or soft finger foods. In the traditional feeding method, babies are often spoon-fed family foods to start.

### Baby-Led Weaning Method (BLW)

Baby-led weaning (BLW), also known as baby-led feeding, is another approach to introduce your baby to solid foods. During meal times, the baby is offered soft-cooked, cut up finger foods that can be grasped in their fist. In BLW, your baby feeds themselves foods that the rest of the family are enjoying, using their hands or a spoon. Reach out to your local Registered Dietitian if you're interested in learning more about baby-led weaning.

Feed your baby the way that works best for you and your family. You don't have to choose one feeding method over another. You can use a combination of both and continue to introduce a variety of foods from family meals.

Infants and young children should always be supervised and seated in an age-appropriate chair during meals and snacks.

Modifying foods can also help to reduce the risk of choking. The following table shows ways to modify foods for your growing baby.

### Food Modifications to Reduce Choking



Type of Food	Hard, raw fruits and vegetables	Fruit with pits	Round foods	Sticky foods	Long, circular foods
Example	Whole apple and carrots	Nectarines, peaches, and plums	Grapes, cherry tomatoes, and blueberries	Peanut butter	Hot dogs
Modification	Grate them	Cut into strips and remove the pit	Slice lengthwise	Spread thinly on toast or cracker	Cut lengthwise and then into small pieces