

Baby-led eating: A healthier approach

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(HealthDay)—With childhood obesity rates soaring, prevention should start at a very early age. One approach gaining in popularity is baby-led weaning.

This means that, when solid foods are introduced, ideally at 6 [months](#), parents let the baby feed himself or herself rather than mom or dad spoon-feeding the typical baby [food](#) purees.

This method enables [babies](#) to stop eating on their own when they feel full and not when their plate is clean. One study found that, at age 2, babies introduced to solid foods this way were less likely to be overweight.

Starting solids at 6 months rather than the old standard of 4 months is in itself aimed at preventing overweight. It's also when [infants](#) have the [motor skills](#) needed to feed themselves.

The [method](#) isn't complicated. The baby eats when the rest of the family eats and can have most of the same foods. However, infants' foods must be very well cooked and cut into easy-to-grasp shapes, usually strips long enough to protrude slightly from the baby's fist when held. It may take some time for him or her to get the hang of holding a piece of food. Let the child learn how—don't put the food into his or her mouth for them.

Offer three or four different foods at each meal, but just one piece of each at a time. Give seconds if he or she is still hungry. A baby may not like a food the first time. Offer it again in the future.

In terms of safety, when infants are supervised, they aren't any more likely to choke on foods than spoon-fed babies. But, as is true for all young eaters, don't give foods in a coin-shape or foods with a high choking risk such as whole grapes, peanuts and popcorn.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [introducing foods to baby](#) and which ones are best.

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