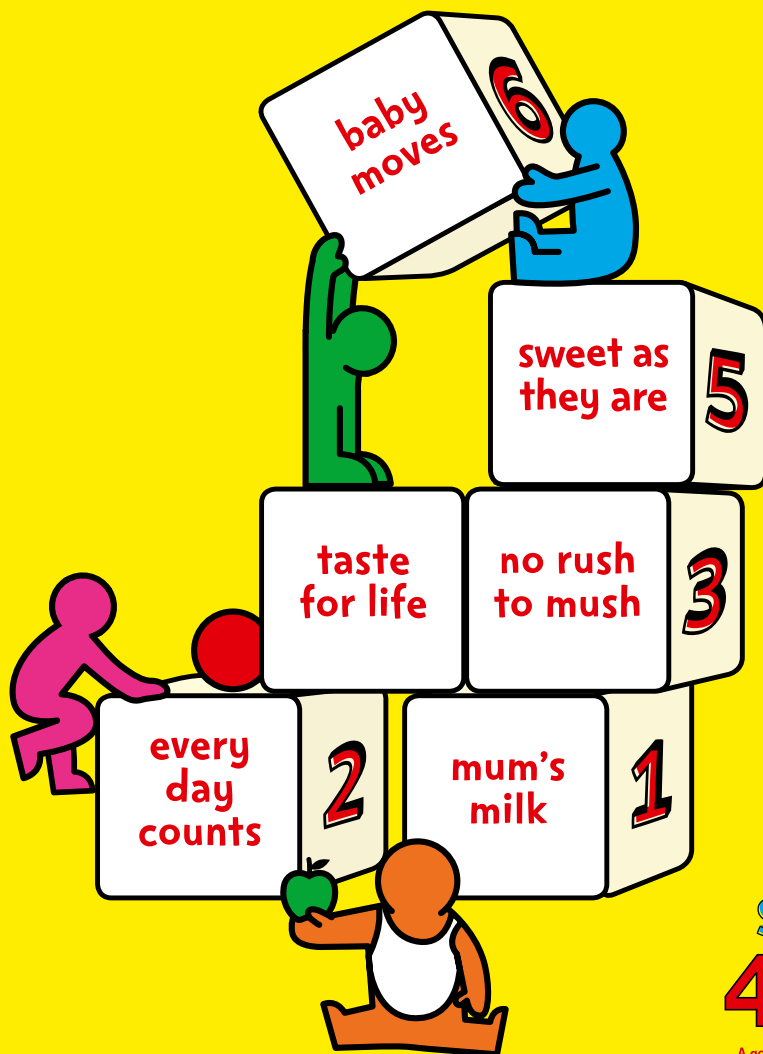


# building blocks for a better start in life



start  
4 life

A good start for a healthier life



# welcome... ...to start4life

## Happy, healthy babies start here

Welcome to Start4Life. We're here to help you give your baby a healthier start in life.

What happens in your baby's first years has a big effect on how healthy he or she will be in the future. Here are some Start4Life building blocks to help you know what's right for your baby.

These are based on the very latest infant health research, so they may be different from advice that's been around for a while. We now know much more about how things like mum's milk can protect babies from bugs when they're young. Combined with a healthy diet and activity, mum's milk can also help prevent obesity later in life – and serious related illnesses like heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

If you have any questions about anything in this booklet or any concerns about your baby's health, please contact your health visitor or GP.

## The latest baby health research

- The World Health Organisation now recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months following a thorough review of scientific studies on the health, growth and development benefits of breastfeeding in 2001
- The World Health Organisation review also found that babies' digestive systems were not developed enough to cope with solid food before they were 6 months old
- The review found no evidence of any benefits of introducing food earlier than 6 months and no deficits in growth of infants exclusively breastfed for 6 months

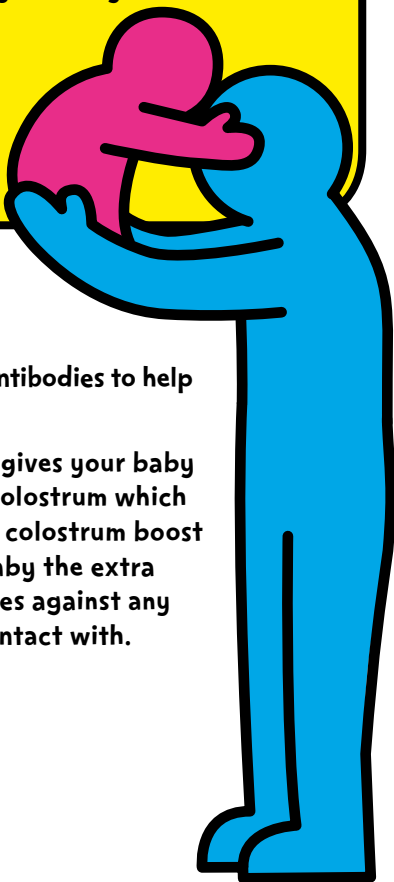
# mum's milk

## building block 1

### Why mums are the baby milk experts

Your milk is perfect and uniquely made for your growing baby's needs. Giving your milk to your baby makes a big difference to both your baby's health and yours. Formula milk is made from cow's milk and other ingredients. It doesn't include the ingredients that help protect your baby from infection and disease. Only your body can make those.

There's lots of support available to help you with breastfeeding; just ask your midwife or health visitor.



### A very special recipe

Mum's milk is packed full of disease-fighting antibodies to help protect babies from getting ill.

In the first few days after birth, mum's milk gives your baby a special infection-fighting booster called colostrum which can't be found anywhere else. And after the colostrum boost is over, mum's milk continues to give your baby the extra ability to fight germs by providing antibodies against any infections you or your baby have been in contact with.

## Breastfeeding helps protect babies from

- Developing eczema
- Getting serious ear, chest and tummy bugs and having to go to hospital
- Being fussy about new foods
- Being constipated
- Being obese which means they are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes when they are older

## It's great for mums too!

- Breastfeeding lowers your risk of getting breast cancer
- Breastfeeding lowers your risk of getting ovarian cancer
- Breastfeeding uses about 500 extra calories a day, making it easier to lose pregnancy weight
- Breastfeeding could save you money. Formula feeding can cost up to £45 a month!
- Breastfeeding is less hassle than formula. You don't have to clean and sterilise bottles, boil water and wait for the milk to cool, which really isn't fun for those night time and early morning feeds



## True or false?

### Lots of mums just can't breastfeed.

False. Only 2% of women are physically unable to breastfeed but many mums find it difficult because often they haven't had the help they might need. The good news is there are experts near you who can help you find the right way to hold and feed your baby. Ask your midwife or call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212\***.

## Getting help

Almost all mums are physically able to breastfeed, but it can take a little while to get the hang of it. It really helps to get someone to show you the right way to hold and feed your baby, like your midwife, health visitor or a breastfeeding peer supporter – she is a mum who has done it before and has had training to help you.

Don't worry if you feel overwhelmed at first. It does get a lot easier. By about 6 weeks most babies settle down into a pattern and feed less often. And, if you need a break you can express milk so someone else can help.

Breastfeeding groups are a great way to make new friends as well as sharing the ups and downs of looking after a new baby. Don't be afraid to ask for the support and information you need to make breastfeeding work for you. No problem is too small – if something is worrying you, the chances are other mothers will have felt the same.

Your health visitor, midwife or peer supporter is there to help. If you have any difficulties or worries call them straightaway.

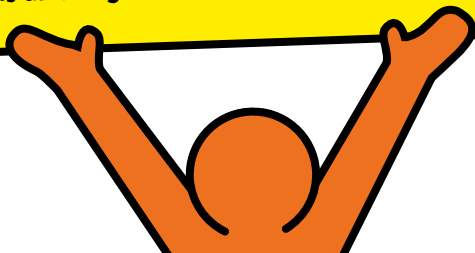
Call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212\***. A trained volunteer mother in your area, who will be able to give local help and information including details of your nearest breastfeeding group, will answer your call.

Go to [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life) or call Start4Life on **0300 123 1021\*** for more information on breastfeeding and lots of tips from mums and experts.

### True or false?

**It doesn't make any difference if you top up your baby with formula after the first few days of breastfeeding.**

False. Giving formula milk can reduce the protection your baby gets from your milk. The more mum's milk they get, the more able they are to fight off germs and bugs.



# every day counts

## building block 2

### How each day of mum's milk makes a difference to your baby's health

The latest research shows that each day and each week you continue to breastfeed, you're helping to protect your baby against infections and strengthening their ability to fight disease.

Each month of breastfeeding lowers the risk of illnesses that can put babies into hospital. It also helps protect babies against becoming overweight or obese, which means they are less likely to develop diseases like type 2 diabetes in the future.

Formula milk is an OK food for babies but it can't give your baby all this protection because it's not uniquely made for your baby. The longer you give your baby mum's milk, the more they benefit. Giving them only mum's milk for about 6 months, and then alongside solid foods after that, is ideal.

### Useful tips

- Breastfeeding is a great opportunity to get closer to your baby as well as a good chance to sit down and relax. Or if you want to do something, grab a book or magazine, have a natter on the phone or watch TV
- If you have to be away from your baby – for example, because your baby is ill or premature, or because you're going back to work – you can express milk so that somebody else can feed your baby
- You'll probably feel quite thirsty. Have a drink beside you before you sit down to breastfeed

You can get help from:

- Your midwife or health visitor
- The National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212\***



# no rush to mush

## building block 3

### 3 signs that your baby is ready to start on solid foods

Research shows that starting solid food at the right time is important for your baby's health.

Some parents start feeding solid foods before their baby is ready. It's easy to mistake normal baby behaviour for an interest in food, but just because a baby is looking at food, feeding more regularly or waking during the night, it doesn't mean that they are ready for solids. There are 3 clear signs which, together, show it's time to start solids alongside mum's milk or formula.

Your baby is ready if they can:

1. Stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady.
2. Co-ordinate their eyes, hand and mouth and look at food, grab it and put it in their mouth all by themselves.
3. Swallow food. Babies who are not ready will push their food back out, so they get more round their face than they do in the mouths!

These signs usually appear together at around 6 months – rarely much earlier.

It's important to remember that if your baby is ready for solid food all 3 signs will be there.



### Try the banana challenge!

If your baby is able to sit up with their head steady, reach out, grab a finger-sized piece of peeled, ripe banana, and eat some of it all by themselves, they are ready!

# Why it's best not to give your baby solid food until they are ready

The latest research now shows that feeding babies solid food before they are ready can lead to gut infections that may need hospital treatment. That's because your baby is developing on the inside as well as the outside. We now know that it takes around 6 months for a baby's digestive system to work properly and cope well with solid food. Plus if you feed them mum's milk up to and beyond 6 months it gives them even more protection against infection.

Some baby foods may say 'from 4 months' but this is based on out-of-date research. Here's what health experts say today:

## Top tips

- Don't worry if your baby starts waking in the night. They may be teething or having a hungry spell. Extra milk is all they need
- And don't worry about having enough milk. Just feed your baby when they are hungry - your body will make more milk to keep up
- Waiting till your baby is ready saves you a lot of time too as they will quickly be able to feed themselves. So you don't have to spend ages holding out spoons, although there may still be a need to clear up the mess
- Always stay with your baby when they are eating to make sure they don't choke
- You'll find lots of helpful tips on what to feed your baby in building block 4 'taste for life'



## True or false?

**Babies who are big for their age need solids earlier than other babies.**

False. It's easy to see why people might think that, but this is generally not the case. Babies are ready for solids when their digestive systems are developed enough to cope at around 6 months. But every baby is an individual, so if you think yours is ready, try the banana challenge first.

# taste for life

## building block 4

### **Giving your baby a variety of food now may stop them turning into a fussy eater later**

Babies like the food they get used to. Give them very salty, fatty or sweet foods and drinks when they are little and they are more likely to want them when they are older - and you've got yourself a fussy eater!

But if you give them lots of different healthy foods when they are little they are more likely to keep eating the good stuff as they grow. Healthy food now is great because it's really hard to change what they eat when they are older. Just ask any mum!

### **Top tips**

#### **Demonstrate**

Babies copy their parents so you can help them by showing them you eat lots of different healthy foods.

#### **3rd time lucky (or 4th or 5th...)**

Don't give up if your baby doesn't like something at first. Babies like familiar foods and sometimes you need to offer a food 10-15 times before your baby will like it.

#### **Finger feeds**

It's a good idea to allow your baby to feed themselves using their fingers. This way they can show you how much they want to eat, and it gets them familiar with the different types of food.

#### **Count what's in a week (not in a day)**

Don't worry whether your baby has eaten enough in a meal or a day, but count up what they eat in a week.

## More top tips

### Tiny tums

A baby's stomach is only about the size of their clenched fist, so they can only eat small amounts. They also know when they are full up, so don't make them eat when they don't want to. Smaller, more frequent meals and healthy snacks are better.

### Jars or packets just sometimes

Baby food in jars or packets can be handy but much of it has a similar texture. This may stop your baby from liking other foods. That's why baby food is best left for when you don't have much time or you're out with your baby. It's important to check the label for salt and sugar and remember your baby doesn't need to eat it all.

### Made from scratch

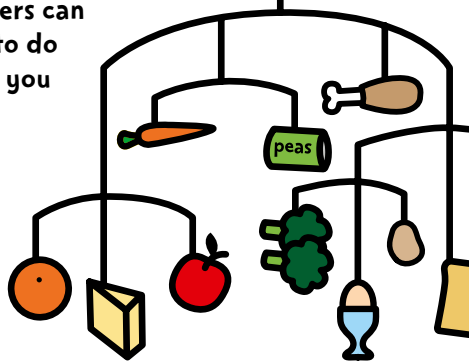
The best baby food is homemade from simple ingredients with no sugar, salt or spices. It's a lot cheaper than jars and you can mash some of your vegetables to get your baby used to eating the variety of foods that you eat, just cook without salt or spices and add these to your food afterwards. Any leftovers can be frozen in ice cube trays. Then all you have to do is reheat the amount you need for times when you are in a hurry.

### Sugar free

Sugary food and drink will give your baby tooth decay. They don't need added sugar so it's best to avoid it.

### Salt free

Too much salt is damaging for babies' bodies so make sure none has been added to your baby's food. Avoid stock cubes and gravy (they can contain lots of salt) and go easy on things like baked beans (even low salt, low sugar baked beans) and cheese. If your baby is trying some of your meal, make sure you haven't added salt.



## First foods first!

Once your baby is about 6 months old and has passed the banana challenge on page 7, he or she is ready to start eating some solid foods. Here's a handy timeline of what you should give at each stage:

### From 0-6 months

Mum's milk or formula milk (follow on milk is not suitable for babies below 6 months).

### From 6 months

First foods: Keep feeding mum's milk or formula, but don't give cow's milk as a drink. Fruit and veg like cooked parsnip, potato, yam, sweet potato, carrot, avocado, pear or cooked apple. Grabbable baby-sized bits of banana. Baby rice mixed with milk.

Next foods: Healthy foods like meat, fish, pasta, noodles, bread, chapatti, lentils and mashed rice plus hard boiled eggs, full fat cheese and low sugar yoghurt, fromage frais or custard.

### From 12 months

3 meals a day, chopped if required, plus milk. Try healthy snacks like fruit, vegetable sticks, toast and rice cakes too. They can drink full fat cow's milk and have full fat dairy products. Choose full fat because children under 2 need the extra fat and vitamins in full fat dairy products. From 2 years old if they are a good eater and growing well they can have semi-skimmed milk, and from 5 years old, skimmed milk is ok.

## True or false?

**It's best to stick to the foods your baby likes.**

False. It is true that babies like familiar foods, so they're unlikely to try something the first time you offer it. But habits are formed between 6 and 12 months, so if you keep offering different healthy foods, there's more chance they'll eat more healthily when they're older.

## Things to watch

**Sweet drinks** like squash, fizzy drinks, milkshakes and some fruit juices can have lots of sugar so avoid these if you can and protect your baby's teeth.

**Sweet foods** like chocolate, sweets, Indian sweets (mishit or mithai), chin chin, rusks, biscuits, cakes and pastries have lots of sugar and fat.

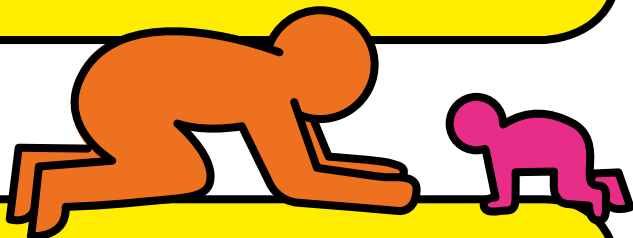
**Salt and salty foods** like chips, crisps, fried food, convenience food, fast food, takeaways, stock cubes and gravy can contain lots of salt, which is bad for babies.

**Choking.** Be careful with hard foods, bones, small round foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes, and foods with skin like sausages. Avoid whole nuts – these shouldn't be given until your child is 5 years old.

**Cow's milk as a drink** shouldn't be given before 1 year.

**Honey** can make babies ill, so avoid it before they are 1 year.

If you choose to introduce solid foods before 6 months and have checked this with your doctor avoid giving them wheat, nuts, seeds, liver, eggs, fish and shellfish and soft unpasteurised cheese.



## True or false?

**You shouldn't give your baby extra solids to stop them crying.**

True. Babies learn very quickly to use solids as a comforter, which could lead to weight problems in later life, so only feed your baby solids if they're hungry. Otherwise a cuddle or mum's milk is always best.

# sweet as they are

## building block 5

### How to avoid giving your baby a sweet tooth

If you give your baby sweet things they are likely to get a taste for it. In fact giving babies stuff with added sugar can cause serious problems. Here's why sugar is not so sweet:

- Sugar can rot their tiny teeth. Drinks with added sugar are really bad news for baby teeth – it's like giving them a lolly to suck all day.
- Sugar gives babies a higher risk of becoming overweight or obese which can lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers in later life.
- Giving babies sugary things makes them more likely to pester for more. It can be difficult to say no – but that means your baby will learn that pestering and crying gets them what they want.

Try to avoid sugary stuff where you can. You can give water with meals instead of sugary drinks and healthier treats like fruit or breadsticks. Non-food rewards are even better, like a trip to the park!



### Healthy snacks

#### Instead of...

Chocolate  
Sweets  
Biscuits  
Cakes  
Pastries  
Ice cream  
Sugared or toffee popcorn  
Crisps

#### ... Try

Canned fruit in juice  
Fresh fruit  
Unsweetened yoghurt with fruit  
Frozen, unsweetened yoghurt  
Frozen fruit  
Rice pudding or porridge (with no added sugar or salt)  
Baked fruit like apples and rhubarb  
Bread rolls, toasted bread, bread sticks, rice cakes, or bagels

#### Sneaky sugars

Foods like rusks, dried fruit, baked beans, baby food and drinks like sweetened fruit juice, milk shakes and flavoured water can actually contain lots of sugar. Always check the label first.

# baby moves

## building block 6

### Why it's important for all little ones to be lively and active

Being active takes brain and muscle power and plays an important part in your baby's development.

Babies love moving about but they can't always do it on their own. That's where you come in! You can play with them and help them do new movements and explore their surroundings. The more they kick their legs, reach out, pull and push on things, crawl, toddle (and walk, jump and run when they're older), the more likely they are to enjoy being active when they grow up. There's more good news too - playing with your baby is a great chance to bond and if they burn energy by moving around it may help them to sleep too.

Research shows that inactive babies have less opportunity to develop than active babies. So it's important not to keep them in a pram or rocker for too long. If they get used to being inactive it may cause weight problems when they are older.

Here are some ideas to help you get them going.

### Ideas for active play

Babies just love...

#### Cuddles and wriggles

Getting them out of their cot or rocker for a cuddle and a game of peek-a-boo is a great way of getting them to move their muscles. They also love kicking their legs and wriggling about, so put down a soft mat and give them lots of space to wriggle around and play.



## Singing and talking

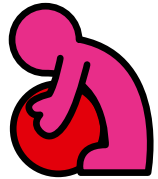
Babies love being sung to and talked to. So sing a nursery rhyme or a song, clap their hands gently or rock them to the rhythm.

## Playing

Any play is a great way for babies to interact and be active, even when they're tiny. Most leisure centres have mother and baby classes or soft play areas, or you can take them to the park or to your local baby swimming pool. Just playing at home with toys or mum or dad is great too.

## Crawling about

It's their first chance to explore and the living room is full of adventure! Make space for them to move freely, easily and safely by moving anything sharp, heavy or breakable out of their reach.



## Toddling around

Practice makes perfect so try and make sure your baby is free to toddle around (keep them away from stairs). And why not let them toddle along for a bit when you're out with them?



## Things to watch

It's important that your baby is free to move around. Here are some things to look out for.

### Baby signs

Babies can't move if they're strapped in a rocker or if their clothes make it difficult because they're too small or too big. Even baby grows can stop them moving. Watch for your baby looking fidgety and give them some room to move around.

### TV

Babies that watch too much TV will get less chance to be active, so try and reduce their time in front of the telly and encourage them to be active instead.

### Rockers

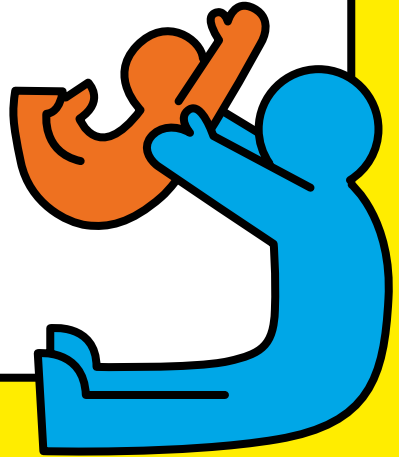
Babies who are strapped into rockers don't get the freedom to move around. It's fine to use them sometimes, but making a safe space for them to explore and wriggle around instead will keep them happy and healthy.

# We're here to help you

If you need to talk to someone about anything in this booklet, or anything to do with your baby's health, please ask.

## You can:

- Talk to your midwife or health visitor and ask them for one or both of the following booklets:
  - 'Off to the best start' – all about how to get established with mum's milk
  - 'Weaning. Starting solid food'
- Call Start4Life on **0300 123 1021\*** or visit [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)
- Call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212\***



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\*Calls to 03 numbers should cost no more than geographic 01 or 02 UK-wide calls and may be part of inclusive minutes subject to your provider and your call package. The National Breastfeeding helpline is open from 9.30am to 9.30pm. The Start4Life lines are open from 9am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

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**A good start for a healthier life**