A parent's guide to introducing allergens

Seymour House

Once your little one has started exploring their first tastes, it's a good idea to begin introducing the main allergens, one at a time, from around 6 months.

It is possible for a baby to have an allergic reaction to any food, but there are 14 main allergens that are recognised in UK food allergen regulations.

To help us keep your baby safe, our preference is that each of the main allergens are introduced and tolerated at home before they are offered at nursery. This means your baby should have tried each allergen at home and had no signs of an allergic reaction before we can include that allergen in their meals at nursery. At nursery, we record all allergens your baby has been introduced to and tolerated on their individual Care Needs Record. Where an allergen has not yet been introduced at home, we will discuss this with you as part of our menu planning.



The 14 main allergens are:

1. Cow's milk
2. Cereals containing gluten e.g. wheat, rye, oat and barley
3. Egg
4. Soya
5. Fish
6. Crustations
7. Molluscs
8. Sesame
9. Peanuts
10. Tree nuts
11. Celery
12. Lupin
13. Mustard
14. Sulphites



Tips for introducing allergens:



Introduce one allergen at a time:

Offer allergens either on their own or alongside foods that your baby already tolerates. Introducing more than one new food at once makes it harder to identify which food caused any reaction.

No fixed order for allergens:

While there's no required sequence for introducing allergens, some studies suggest introducing egg first, followed by peanuts. After that, other allergens can be introduced in any order. You might like to focus on the allergens that you commonly eat in your own diet.

Introduce allergens when baby is well:

Always introduce allergens when your baby is healthy and symptom-free, as any reaction could be harder to identify if your baby has other symptoms.

Start with small portions:

For some allergens like egg and peanut, begin with very small amounts (e.g., ¼ - ½ teaspoon of egg or smooth peanut butter mixed with a puree the baby already tolerates). Starting with small portions reduces the severity of any potential reaction.

Introduce allergens in the morning:

This gives you the chance to monitor your baby throughout the day for any signs of a reaction and respond quickly if needed.

Leave 3-4 days between allergens:

Allow 3-4 days between introducing each new allergen. This gives enough time to observe your baby for any delayed reactions and helps ensure that a potential reaction can be linked to the right food.

If tolerated, continue offering:

If your baby tolerates the allergen and there is no sign of a reaction, aim to offer it around twice a week to help build tolerance. You can gradually increase the amount with each serving.

Know when to seek medical help:

If you notice symptoms like swelling of the lips, tongue, or mouth/throat, wheezing, difficulty breathing or swallowing, or sudden paleness, floppiness, or sleepiness, seek medical attention immediately.



Further information about allergies and weaning can be found at Allergy UK

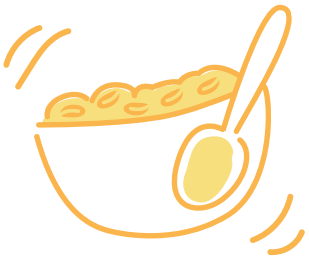
How to introduce the 14 main allergens

1. Cow's milk



Cow's milk can be introduced as an ingredient in foods from around 6 months. Try offering plain, full-fat natural yoghurt or fromage frais, or adding a little grated cheese or full-fat cream cheese to foods your baby already enjoys. You can also add a small amount of whole cow's milk to foods such as porridge or mashed potato.

Please note that whole cow's milk should not be used as your baby's main drink before 12 months.



2. Cereals containing gluten

Gluten is found in cereals such as wheat, rye and barley. Oats are also included within the allergen group of cereals containing gluten.

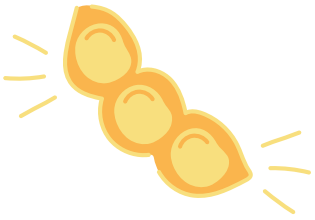
You could try foods such as toast fingers, well-cooked pasta, couscous or a small amount of a suitable gluten-containing breakfast cereal. Choose products with no added salt or sugar where possible.

3. Egg

Egg can be offered in lots of different ways. Try a small amount of well-cooked scrambled egg, omelette or hard-boiled egg, or mash egg into foods your baby already enjoys.

Egg can also be offered as a soft finger food, such as omelette strips or pieces of hard-boiled egg, provided these are suitable for your baby's stage of development.





4. Soya

Soya, also known as soy, is a type of legume. You could introduce it through mashed edamame beans, tofu, plain soya yoghurt or a small amount of unsweetened soya milk added to food.

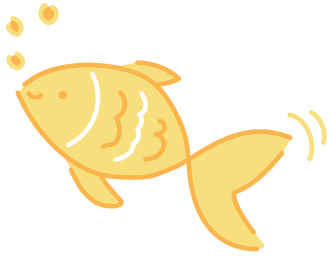
For example, try mixing mashed tofu or edamame beans into vegetables, or adding a little unsweetened soya milk to porridge or breakfast cereal.

Soya milk should not replace breast milk or infant formula as your baby's main milk drink before 12 months.

5. Fish

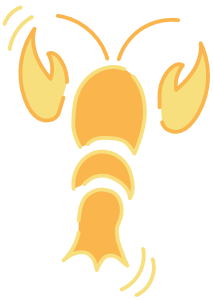
Try a small amount of well-cooked fish, such as salmon, trout, cod, haddock or hake. Fish can be flaked or mashed and offered on its own or mixed into foods your baby has already eaten safely.

Always check very carefully for bones before serving.



How to introduce the 14 main allergens

6. Crustaceans



Crustaceans include prawns, crab, lobster, crayfish and shrimp.

Make sure they are thoroughly cooked and finely chopped, mashed or blended into a suitable texture for your baby. You can offer a small amount on its own or mix it into a food your baby already enjoys.



7. Molluscs

Molluscs include mussels, clams, oysters and squid.

These should always be thoroughly cooked and prepared into a texture that is safe for your baby. Try finely chopping, mashing or blending a small amount into another food your baby already tolerates.

8. Sesame



Sesame can be introduced using tahini, which is a smooth paste made from sesame seeds.

Try mixing a small amount of tahini into plain yoghurt, porridge, mashed vegetables or another food your baby already enjoys.

Hummus can also contain sesame because it is often made with tahini.
If using shop-bought hummus, check the ingredients and choose one with less added salt where possible.



9. Peanuts

Use smooth peanut butter with no added salt or sugar. A small amount (e.g. ¼ teaspoon) can be mixed into foods your baby already eats safely, such as fruit purée, yoghurt, porridge or mashed vegetables or spread thinly on toast, rice cakes or oat cakes for example.

Never give your baby whole or broken peanuts or nuts, as these can cause choking. Whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years.

10. Tree nuts



Tree nuts include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts, among others.

A safe way to introduce tree nuts is to use a smooth nut butter or finely ground/milled nuts. Try mixing a small amount into yoghurt, porridge, fruit or another food your baby already enjoys.

Never give whole or broken nuts to babies or young children because of the risk of choking. Whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years.

How to introduce the 14 main allergens

11. Celery



Celery can be introduced as a vegetable. Try cooking it until soft and blending or mashing it into vegetables, soups or other foods your baby already eats safely.

Celery can also be found as an ingredient in stock cubes, gravy, sauces and other prepared foods. If using these products, always check the ingredients and choose options that are suitable for babies and low in salt.



12. Lupin

Lupin is a type of legume that is more commonly used in some European foods than in the UK. It can be found in products such as some breads, cakes and gluten-free baked goods, and may also be available as lupin flour in health food shops or online.

A small amount of lupin flour can be incorporated into a suitable homemade food, such as a pancake or baked item. Always check the packaging and prepare the food in a texture that is safe for your baby.

13. Mustard



Mustard is made from the seeds of the mustard plant. A very small amount of mustard or mustard powder can be mixed into a food your baby already eats safely.

For example, you could mix a tiny amount into mashed vegetables or another savoury dish.

Choose products with little or no added salt and avoid offering large amounts of mustard because of its strong flavour.



14. Sulphites

Sulphites are used as preservatives in some foods and drinks and may be listed on food labels as sulphur dioxide or sulphites. They can be found in some dried fruits, sauces and other packaged foods.

When introducing sulphites, check the ingredient list of a suitable food for sulphur dioxide or a named sulphite and offer a small amount of that food. For example, some dried fruits may contain sulphites. These can be soaked, finely chopped or pureed and added to breakfast cereals, yoghurts or other foods your baby enjoys.

Always check the label carefully, as not all dried fruits contain added sulphites. Choose foods that are otherwise suitable for babies and avoid foods that are high in added sugar or salt.

Your baby's weaning journey

As part of the settling-in process, your Key Person will discuss your baby's current stage of weaning with you, so we can understand their individual needs and support them as they begin to explore new foods and textures.

Together, you'll complete a Care Needs Record, giving us a clear picture of your baby's weaning journey. This will include any allergens they have already been introduced to at home, their current stage of weaning, the textures they are comfortable with, and their bottle-feeding requirements.

We'll continue to discuss your baby's progress with you and update their Care Needs Record as they grow and move through each stage of their weaning journey. This ensures we can provide safe, responsive and nurturing support at every step.