

Baby-Led Weaning (BLW)

Baby-Led Weaning is a feeding approach where infants aged six months and older self-feed soft, finger-sized portions of food instead of being spoon-fed purees. This method supports motor skill development, autonomy, and integration into family meals. Infants are ready for BLW when they can sit upright, grasp objects, and show interest in food.

Benefits of BLW for Child Nutrition Programs

- **Promotes Healthy Eating Habits:** Encourages infants to accept a variety of foods, reduces picky eating, and fosters self-regulation of hunger.
- **Supports Development:** Improves fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and chewing abilities essential for eating.
- **Aligns with Program Goals:** Encourages family-style eating practices and social mealtime routines while supporting developmental milestones.

Safety and Nutritional Tips

- Always supervise infants during meals and ensure they are seated upright.
- Serve soft, easy-to-grasp foods like mashed avocado, cooked vegetables, and shredded meats.
- Avoid choking hazards such as hard, uncooked or raw fruits and vegetables, whole grapes, and sticky foods.
- Prioritize nutrient-dense options like IFIC cereals, lentils, and soft meats to meet developmental need.



Create a nutritious meal with credited BLW friendly meal components from the CACFP manual.

BLW practices align with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) infant meal pattern requirements:

- Serve meals that include breast milk or formula alongside solid foods.
- Offer BLW-friendly options like soft fruits, vegetables, and iron fortified infant cereals, ensuring they meet CACFP guidelines for portion sizes and preparation.
- IFIC cereals are still the only grains that count towards a reimbursable meal, other credited grains may be offered as a snack.
- Maintain accurate infant menu records of the foods offered as part of the meal pattern.
- A meal or snack is only reimbursable if all the required meal components are offered.
- Document conversations with parents/caregivers regarding the infant's developmental readiness.

How Child Nutrition Staff Can Support BLW

Educate Caregivers: Provide guidance on safe food preparation, portioning, and documentation. **BLW uses the same 6–11-month menu documentation template.**

Encourage Nutritional Balance: Highlight the importance of offering iron-rich foods and a variety of textures to support growth and development.

Promote Flexibility: Reassure caregivers that combining BLW with spoon-feeding is acceptable as long as infants lead the feeding process.

Provide Resources: Share evidence-based tools like sample menus, safety checklists, and training on CACFP requirements [infant meal pattern chart](#).

Resources

[Weaning Your Baby | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)

[Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

[HealthyChildren.org](#)

[TeamNutrition.USDA.gov](#)



Reminder!

Cut breads and bread-like items into thin strips or small pieces no larger than ½ inch. This will reduce the risk of a baby choking.



Potential Foods to Include

Soft fruits: Banana, Avocado, Ripe pear, Cooked apples, Tomato

Cooked vegetables: Sweet potato, Squash, Zucchini, Broccoli

Iron-rich foods: Shredded meat, Beans, Iron fortified infant cereals

Whole Grains: Iron fortified infant cereal, Pita bread, Pancakes

Dairy: Plain Yogurt, Cottage cheese

Foods to Avoid

Raw or hard foods: Carrots, Raw apples, Underripe fruits, Raw broccoli

Sticky foods: Nut butter, Marshmallow

Round or coin shaped foods: Whole grapes, Nuts, Whole berries

Honey and luncheon meats:
Risk of botulism under 1 year

Risk of foodborne illness

Sugary, processed, or high-salt foods