

Will solids help my baby sleep longer?

Starting solids can be exciting (and confusing). This guide helps you understand when to start, how solids may affect sleep, and practical tips to support your baby's routines.



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Will solids help sleep?

Adequate solids intake can help reduce hunger-related waking overnight and may support longer stretches of sleep. As babies grow, a balanced intake of iron-rich and energy-dense foods becomes increasingly important in helping meet their nutritional & sleep needs. **However, starting solids too soon, progressing too quickly, can sometimes negatively impact sleep.** Tummy discomfort, constipation, reduced milk intake, or nutritional gaps can all contribute to disrupted sleep.

From around 6 months, many babies become physiologically capable of sleeping for longer stretches overnight. However, every baby is different, and for many families, continuing one or two overnight feeds is completely appropriate.

Frequent waking isn't always caused by hunger, but a baby eating mostly fruit and vegetables without enough iron-rich and energy-dense foods may still genuinely need overnight feeds to meet their nutritional requirements.

For advice around reducing overnight feeds, always discuss this with your healthcare provider or seek personalised support. Generally, my approach is always to start with encouraging the day feeds first, then slowly reducing overnight.

Dani's personal experience

I used to believe 'food before one is just for fun'. When Blake was around 7-8 months and struggling with sleep, increasing solids intake became an important part of getting him back on track. But we also learned not to push too hard. Blake eventually developed spoon refusal, and we later discovered a tongue tie was affecting his feeding.

Sometimes gentle encouragement is all that's needed. Other times there can be something more going on. If your gut instinct tells you something isn't right, reach out to a healthcare professional.

Disclaimer: This guide provides general advice only and is not intended to replace the personalised care and recommendations provided by your child's GP, paediatrician, MCHN, or other healthcare professional. Always consult your healthcare provider before making decisions about feeding or introducing solids.



How & When

General advice is to start solids around **6 months**. **Starting solids earlier has not been shown to improve sleep. Follow your healthcare professional's advice for your individual baby.** Around **4 months**, babies often go through a big **growth spurt**. They may seem hungrier, which can tempt you to introduce solids early. Instead, it's usually more appropriate to **increase the volume of milk feeds** to support this phase:



- Offer some extra **'top-up' or half feeds** during the day (see sample routines below).
- If **breastfeeding**, you can do 3 days of extra feeds to help slightly increase your supply. After 3 days, your supply will likely increase, and your baby can take in more volume within their usual feeds.

Signs Your Baby May Be Ready for Solids:

See [Raising Children Network](#) for specific advice, but signs of readiness include:

- Good **head and neck control**
- Ability to **sit upright when supported** (e.g. in a highchair)
- Shows **interest in food**
- **Opens mouth** when food is offered



How to Start:

- Begin with **lunch**, ideally offered **after the first nap** and **at least one hour before the next nap** to allow for digestion and avoid disrupting sleep.
- Start with **simple, easily digested foods**, such as:
 - Iron-fortified rice cereal
 - Stewed pear
 - Sweet potato
 - Pumpkin
- Once your baby is comfortably eating a **good volume at lunch (~½ cup)**, you can introduce **dinner**, followed by **breakfast**.



Starting Solids & Supporting Sleep

Iron

Iron is crucial for growth, energy, brain development and sleep regulation.

At around 6 months babies iron stores begin to reduce, so aim to include iron- rich foods such as:

- red meat
- poultry
- fish
- eggs
- beans
- legumes

Preventing constipation

Constipation can significantly affect sleep.

Support digestion by:

- Offering sips of water with meals
- Give up to **3 tbsp of stewed prunes or apricots, 3 times/week**, or offering **diluted prune juice**.
- Encouraging movement and tummy time
- Trying tummy massage and bicycle legs
- If your baby is under 12 months old and you think they are constipated, you should consult your **GP or Maternal and Child Health Nurse**. (RCH, Raising Children)

Modified Baby-Led Weaning

Combine BLW finger foods with traditional spoon- fed options to **encourage self-feeding while ensuring adequate nutrition** and sleep- supportive intake.

Preparing ahead can make this easier—freeze protein and carbohydrate-rich options like pureed meat in ice cube trays, pre- made meatballs, or keep tins of sardines in the pantry for quick, nourishing meals.

Gagging is a normal reflex as babies learn to manage textures. **Choking** is a medical emergency. To feel confident with baby-led weaning and prepared to respond if choking occurs, consider attending a **paediatric first aid course**. *Emergcare* offers high-quality, health-professional-led training, supported by Kidsafe Victoria and COPE.

Allergen Tracker

Introduce common allergens early (especially egg & peanut) **before 12 months** to reduce allergy risk. Introduce **one new allergen at a time**, and continue offering it at least once a week, unless a reaction occurs. (ASCIA)

Allergen	✓ Tried?	Notes:
Peanut	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Egg	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Cow's milk	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wheat	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Soy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fish	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Shellfish	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sesame	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Tree nuts	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(eg cashew/almond paste)		

If your baby has an allergic reaction, stop giving that food and seek medical advice. **Stick this on the fridge and tick off as you go!**





Sleep & Feed Tracker

It can be hard to know what's helping, and what's not helping, sleep. Tracking food and sleep for a few days can reveal helpful patterns and trends. At the very least, it gives you something useful to bring to your GP, MCHN, or Dani when seeking personalised support

	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
Wake time			
F/F			
1st Nap			
F/F			
2nd Nap			
F/F			
3rd Nap			
F/F			
Bedtime			
Notes: (to help you track any patterns)			

(F/F = feed/food)

Stick this on the fridge and fill it out as you go.

What to expect in the first few weeks

- Milk remains your main source of nutrition
- Appetite can change day to day
- Changes in poo colour & consistency is common
- Mess & food throwing are normal parts of learning
- Solids do not usually lead to instant longer sleep



When personalised support may help

Sleep and feeding can be complicated because there is rarely just one factor involved. Sometimes it's hunger, sometimes routines, sometimes settling, temperament, feeding difficulties, medical concerns, or simply developmental changes.

When working together, I don't just look at sleep. I also consider:

- ✓ Milk intake & solids progression
- ✓ Wake windows, routines & sleep needs
- ✓ Settling techniques
- ✓ Temperament & parenting style
- ✓ Growth, health & sleep readiness
- ✓ Overnight feeds and whether hunger may be contributing

Whether you need a full support package or simply a one-off support call, sometimes a personalised approach can make things feel much clearer.

Lets figure out what's going on **here**.



A final note from me...

If there's one thing I hope you get from this guide, it's some confidence by empowering you with information. **Even as a paediatric nurse, I didn't fully appreciate the importance of solids this early on**, or how much nutrition can influence sleep. I also remember feeling overwhelmed trying to figure out what actually counted as iron-rich foods. We've had a significant allergy journey too and a few years ago I had no idea what soy was! This phase can feel like a huge learning curve for anybody.

I've also been the mum Googling, second-guessing, and wondering if I was missing something. **Sleep deprivation has a way of making everything feel impossible.** Sometimes small changes make a big difference, and sometimes there can be something more going on underneath.



If you're feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, or stuck in the cycle right now, please know it's okay to get help. Having support doesn't just help your child sleep better. It helps YOU breathe a little easier too and **allows you to enjoy these early years that fly by so quickly.** Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, reach out.

Dani xo