

BEGINNING BABY LED WEANING

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I have been thinking of starting baby led weaning with baby # 2 long before he was born. A few days before he turned 6 months and had been sitting independently for almost a month and a half I started putting him on a high chair during his brother's breakfast time and giving him a banana to play with and he now joins us on the high chair at lunch and plays or mouths his food.

What is baby led weaning?

Baby led weaning allows babies as young as 6 months to decide how much they want to eat instead of putting spoons of food into their mouth by distracting them. You just put them in a high chair and put child sized food in their tray and allow them to pick it up, mouth it, eat it or play with it.

It creates a positive association with food and children learn to try various textures and hopefully results in more adventurous eaters.

Why baby led weaning?

Conditioning really leads to a lot of reasons why we don't trust our bodies, don't stop eating when we are full, snack even though we don't need it etc. etc. As Indians we have consistently been spoon fed as babies and asked to finish what's on our plate and food and eating has been a HUGE part of our childhoods with mothers being traumatized with their baby's food intake or its lack thereof.

With N though I have spoon fed him he had eaten only real food for almost 18 months and I have tried to stop feeding once he is full or says he is done even if he has half his plate left. I try and follow his lead but because he is spoon-fed many times the nanny or others have fed him and they will continue to distract him and sneak spoons in in spite of him being full. (Though for the past two weeks he is eating his lunch completely on his own with a spoon.)

This teaches children not to trust their bodies and leads to a lifetime of difficult relationship with food.

Babies and children rely on their instincts way more than we do. They know when they're full they know when they're hungry they know what they want. We'd do a far better job as parents if we just trusted them instead of thinking we need to jump in and do everything for them.

Breast milk (or formula) for one year is all a baby needs as an ounce has all the nutrients for a baby compared to an ounce of solid food. So solids in the first year are more for play and experimentation.

Baby led weaning allows babies to decide how much and what they want to eat (just like on demand breastfeeding). We as parents need to ensure that they get a variety of food on their trays and let them go at it.

Our journey so far

So far I have given baby A (6 months and 15 days) carrots, dudhi, banana, apple, pear, yellow bell pepper, cauliflower and broccoli florets, mushroom, melon, chickoo, egg, sweet potato, potato,

vegetable cutlet.

While I was prepared for this, it was still a little disconcerting to see nothing go in and everything land up on the floor. For the first few days he self fed with gusto and then for a few days I observed he wasn't very interested in self feeding and still hadn't lost his tongue thrust reflex so nothing was really going in.

However since the last three days I saw him going for the broccoli, which was steamed and sautéed in garlic and butter. I was extremely thrilled to see evidence of him devouring broccoli in his (ahem) diaper contents!

This sort of feeding goes with the paleo/ evolutionary sort of thinking as I am sure parents over the years did not spend hours pretending the spoon was an aero plane and work so hard to feed their babies. The baby ate when the baby could eat.

Now at lunchtime I sit in between both my kids and encourage them to eat their lunch without feeding either and can eat my own lunch with them too. It feels good and I'm happy to let my baby decide how much he wants to eat.

Will elaborate more going forward!

Thanks for reading! did you try baby led weaning? What was your experience? Write to me in the comments.



