

Baby Weaning Food Guide

For Indian Families

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Evidence-Based Guide | 2025–26

1. When to Start

Begin complementary foods at 6 months while continuing breast milk to at least 2 years.

All 3 readiness signs must be present

- Sits upright with minimal support and holds head steady
- Shows clear interest in food — watches others eat, reaches toward food
- Tongue-thrust reflex is gone — no longer automatically pushes food out

2. Prioritise Iron from Day 1

By 6 months, a breastfed baby's iron stores are substantially depleted. Breast milk alone does not provide enough iron after this point. Every solid meal must include an iron-rich food from Day 1. Formula-fed babies carry lower risk as formula is iron-fortified.

Every meal from Day 1 must have at least one iron-rich food. Always pair plant iron with Vitamin C — this increases absorption by up to 3×.

Food	Iron / 100g	How to serve at 6 months	Vitamin C pairing
Masoor dal (red lentil)	7.6 mg	Thick smooth puree — ideal first solid	Drops of lemon after cooking
Moong dal	4.4 mg	Thick smooth puree (once cleared individually)	Fresh tomato puree stirred in
Ragi (finger millet)	3.9 mg	Thick cooked porridge — yogurt consistency, not runny	Pinch of amla or drops of lemon
Chana dal	5.4 mg	After 7–8 months — pressure cook, blend smooth	Tomato base or lemon
Rajma / kidney beans	8.2 mg	After individual ingredients cleared — mash very well	Lemon after serving
Egg yolk — from 6 months	2.7 mg	Hard-boiled yolk mashed into a familiar food	Tomato or amla alongside
Spinach / Palak	2.7 mg	Blanch, blend, stir into dal	Always pair with tomato or amla

Food	Iron / 100g	How to serve at 6 months	Vitamin C pairing
Iron-fortified ragi / oat cereal	Varies	Cook per pack — reliable daily base	Add mango or papaya puree

3. Introducing New Foods: Two-Track Approach

Track A — Non-Allergenic Foods: Introduce Daily

Vegetables, fruits, cereals (rice, oats, ragi), and dals can be introduced every day — one new food per day. Rapid dietary variety is the goal.

- First 2–3 weeks: offer each new food as a single ingredient
- Once 4–6 foods are individually tolerated, begin combining them
- The more variety in the first weeks, the broader the palate accepted later

SINGLE INGREDIENT RULE (weeks 1–3): One new food per day, each offered alone. If a reaction occurs, you must know which food caused it. Introduce rice alone, moong dal alone — only then combine. Combined dishes (like khichdi) from Week 3–4 once individual ingredients are cleared.

Track B — Allergenic Foods: One at a Time, 3–5 Days Observation

Introduce allergens early — from 6 months — one at a time, with a 3–5 day observation window before introducing the next allergen. Non-allergenic new foods continue daily during this time.

Once each allergen is tolerated, keep it in the diet at least 2–3 times per week. Removing a tolerated allergen can cause tolerance to be lost within weeks.

Allergen	Indian form	Starting dose	Observe	Maintain
Egg yolk (6 months)	Hard-boiled yolk mashed into dal or puree. Introduce egg white in well-cooked scrambled egg after yolk is tolerated for 3–5 days.	1/4 tsp yolk mashed into food	3–5 days yolk, then 3–5 days white	Min 2×/week
Peanut	Smooth peanut butter (no chunks/salt) stirred into porridge	1/4 tsp well-mixed in porridge	3–5 days	2–3×/week
Cow's milk protein	Fresh curd or soft paneer — not cow's milk as a drink	1 tsp fresh curd	3–5 days	Daily
Wheat	Suji porridge or soft chapati soaked in dal — no salt/sugar	Small serving suji porridge	3–5 days	Several times/week
Sesame (til)	Thin til paste stirred into porridge	1/4 tsp paste in food	3–5 days	1–2×/week
Soy	Soft tofu well cooked, mashed into vegetables	1 tsp mashed tofu	3–5 days	1–2×/week
Fish (boneless)	Well-cooked boneless rohu/rawa — flaked and mashed fine	1 tsp mashed fish	3–5 days	1–2×/week
Tree nuts	Smooth cashew or walnut paste in porridge — never whole nuts	1/4 tsp paste	3–5 days	2×/week

Allergen	Indian form	Starting dose	Observe	Maintain
Shellfish (if family eats)	Well-cooked prawn mashed fine	1 tsp mashed	3–5 days	As available

Egg introduction — step by step

- Step 1: Hard-boil egg 15 min. Separate yolk. Mash smooth with a few drops of breastmilk or water. Mix 1/4 tsp into familiar masoor dal puree.
- Step 2: Over 3–5 days, increase yolk amount to 1 full yolk if no reaction (hives, vomiting, swelling).
- Step 3: After yolk tolerated — introduce egg white. Offer well-cooked soft scrambled whole egg. Start with 1/4 tsp white, increase gradually. Observe 3–5 days.
- Step 4: Once whole egg cleared — maintain at minimum 2×/week. Hard-boiled, scrambled, omelette strips — all fine.

4. Texture Progression

Progress textures quickly — do not stay at Stage 1 beyond 2 weeks. Missing the sensitive texture window (6–9 months) leads to long-term feeding difficulties and food refusal.

Do NOT start with watery dal water or rice water. Day 1 texture must be THICK smooth puree — yogurt consistency. Thin liquids do not support oral motor development.

Stage	Age	Consistency	Indian examples
1 — Thick Smooth Puree	6 months — Day 1	Thick and smooth. Stays on tilted spoon 1–2 sec. NOT watery — yogurt consistency.	Thick masoor dal puree, mashed banana, thick ragi porridge, smooth sweet potato
2 — Thick Mash	7 months (~2 weeks in)	Fork-mashed. Small soft grains and gentle lumps welcome.	Fork-mashed khichdi (once cleared), lightly mashed banana, mashed cooked vegetables
3 — Soft Lumps + Finger Foods	8 months (~6–8 weeks in)	Visible soft lumps, squish between gums. Soft finger foods at every meal.	Soft idli pieces, small paneer cubes, chapati strips in dal, steamed carrot sticks
4 — Family Foods	9–12 months	Soft family foods chopped small. Mix of textures. Pea-sized pieces from 9 months.	Dal-rice, soft sabzi, small chapati pieces, soft dosa, quartered soft fruit

Finger foods from 6 months: squish test — must squish flat between finger and thumb. Strip/stick shape for 6–8 months; pea-sized pieces from 9 months.

5. Volume of Feeds

Volume is demand-led — escalate based on what baby accepts. Breast milk or formula remains the primary nutrition source until 9–10 months.

Start with 1–2 tsp. If baby opens mouth for more — offer more. You can move from 2 tsp to 2 tbsp within the first week if baby wants more.

Age	Start	Progress to	Meals / day
6 months — first 1–3 days	1–2 tsp	Increase same day or next if accepted	1
6 months — weeks 1–4	2–3 tsp rising	2–3 tbsp, escalate freely	1–2
7 months	3–4 tbsp (~60 ml)	Up to 1/2 cup (120 ml)	2–3
8 months	1/2 cup (120 ml)	Up to 3/4 cup	3 + 1 snack
9–10 months	3/4 cup (175 ml)	Up to 1 cup	3 + 1–2 snacks
10–12 months	~1 cup (240 ml)	Baby sets intake	3 + 2 snacks

6. Hunger and Fullness Cues

Never force, bribe, or distract with screens to get more food in. Feed with full awareness of baby's signals.

Offer more — hunger signs

- Opens mouth eagerly and leans toward spoon or food
- Finishes quickly and looks at the bowl expectantly
- Gets briefly fussy between spoonfuls

STOP — fullness signs

- Turns head away from spoon
- Closes mouth or presses lips together
- Pushes bowl, spoon, or food away
- Gets distracted and disengages
- Slows dramatically or stops swallowing

Never force feed past fullness. Hitting a volume target matters less than building a healthy relationship with food.

7. Feeding Schedule by Age

Phase 1: 6–7 Months — Single Ingredients, Iron First

Week	Foods to introduce (one new food daily)	Texture	Volume	Notes
Week 1 (Days 1–7)	Day 1: Masoor dal (single) Day 2: Ragi porridge (single) Day 3: Mashed banana (single) Day 4: Sweet potato puree (single) Day 5: Mashed pear (single) Day 6: Carrot puree (single) Day 7: Courgette / lauki puree (single)	Thick smooth throughout — NOT watery	1–2 tsp Day 1. Escalate to 2–3 tbsp by Day 7 if accepting.	One new food every day. Iron-rich at every meal. No mixing yet.

Week	Foods to introduce (one new food daily)	Texture	Volume	Notes
Week 2(Days 8–14)	Day 8: Moong dal (single)Day 9: Pumpkin puree (single)Day 10: Apple puree — cooked (single)Day 11: Mashed papaya (single)Day 12: Rice — plain (single)Day 13: EGG YOLK (allergen — 3–5 day watch starts)Day 14: Continue yolk + add broccoli puree	Still thick smooth — slightly less blended	2–4 tbsp. Offer more when hungry.	Non-allergen foods continue daily. Yolk only — no white yet. Observe 3–5 days.
Week 3(Days 15–21)	Introduce egg WHITE (in soft scrambled whole egg) if yolk tolerated.Add: beetroot puree, mango puree, soft avocado.Begin PEANUT BUTTER (allergen) once egg cleared.Begin combining cleared foods: masoor dal + rice.	Moving toward thick mash	4–6 tbsp. Escalate freely.	First combinations of cleared ingredients. Continue daily new non-allergens.
Week 4(Days 22–28)	Curd (allergen — 3–5 day watch).Add: moong dal + carrot together, spinach + dal.Continue rotating all cleared allergens 2–3×/week.	Thick mash — fork mash	Up to 1/2 cup if hungry	2 meals/day. Combined dishes growing. Khichdi now appropriate.

Phase 2: 7–9 Months — Combinations, 3 Meals

Textures move to thick mash (7m) then soft lumps and finger foods (8m). Three meals per day by 8 months. Combined dishes now appropriate as individual ingredients are cleared.

Meal	7 months example	8–9 months example
Breakfast	Ragi porridge (thick mash) + mashed banana alongside	Ragi porridge + banana OR soft scrambled egg strip (once whole egg cleared)
Lunch	Masoor dal + rice mash + 1/4 tsp ghee + lemon	Dal + soft rice + mashed sabzi + ghee + jeera tadka + tomato
Dinner	Mashed sweet potato + moong dal (two cleared, combined)	Khichdi (moong dal + rice + veggies) + mashed sabzi + ghee
Snack	Breastfeed or 1–2 tsp curd (once cleared)	Fresh curd OR soft fruit pieces OR soft paneer cubes

Phase 3: 9–12 Months — Family Foods, Self-Feeding

Time	Meal idea	Iron source
Breakfast 8 AM	Ragi porridge + mashed mango / banana / chikoo alongside	Ragi — fruit adds vitamin C
Mid-morning 10 AM	Soft idli + diluted coconut chutney OR curd	Protein, calcium, probiotics
Lunch 12 PM	Dal + soft rice + mashed sabzi + ghee + jeera tadka + tomato/lemon	Dal + lemon/tomato boost absorption
Snack 3 PM	Soft fruit pieces (papaya, watermelon, pear) OR paneer cubes	Vitamin C supports day's iron
Dinner 6–7 PM	Mixed dal khichdi + vegetables + ghee	Lentils — iron + protein
Bedtime	Breastfeed on demand	Immunity and brain growth

8. Food Ideas Once Single Ingredients Are Cleared

Suitable from 7–8 months. All ingredients must be individually introduced and tolerated before combining.

Dal and Grain Combinations

Dish	Ingredients	How to prepare
Masoor dal khichdi	Masoor dal + rice + carrot + ghee + lemon + pinch cumin	Pressure cook dal, rice, carrot together. Fork mash at 7m, soft lumps at 8m. Add ghee, lemon, and cumin tempering. No salt.
Moong dal + spinach rice	Moong dal + rice + palak + ghee + tiny pinch turmeric + lemon	Pressure cook moong dal, rice, blanched palak together. Mash. Add ghee and turmeric. Lemon at end for iron absorption.
Ragi porridge — enriched	Ragi + banana + a few drops amla juice + 1/4 tsp ghee	Cook ragi to thick consistency. Mash banana in separately. Add ghee and amla drops. No sweetener needed.
Chana dal + pumpkin	Chana dal + pumpkin + ghee + cumin + coriander powder	Pressure cook together. Mash smooth. Temper with cumin in ghee. Add coriander powder. Lemon at end.
Mixed dal khichdi	Moong dal + masoor dal + rice + carrot + beans + ghee + cumin + turmeric	Pressure cook all together. Fork mash at 7m. Temper with cumin in ghee. Add lemon. Very complete iron + protein meal.
Rajma + rice mash	Rajma + rice + tomato + ghee + cumin + coriander powder + lemon	Soak rajma overnight or min 6 hours. Pressure cook until very soft. Mash smooth. Mix with soft rice and tomato puree. Temper with cumin in ghee. Lemon to finish.

Egg Preparations (Once Cleared)

Dish	Ingredients	How to prepare
Hard-boiled yolk puree	Egg yolk + breastmilk or water + masoor dal puree	Boil egg 15 min. Mash yolk smooth. Mix into dal puree. First egg introduction.
Soft scrambled egg	Whole egg (yolk + white) + 1/4 tsp ghee	Beat egg. Cook fully through in ghee on low heat. Mash or serve as soft strips alongside dal and rice.
Egg omelette strips	Whole egg + finely chopped spinach + tiny pinch cumin	Beat egg with spinach and cumin. Cook flat in pan. Cool slightly, cut into finger-food strips. Once whole egg cleared.
Egg khichdi	Whole egg + moong dal + rice + carrot + ghee + cumin + turmeric + lemon	Pressure cook khichdi (dal + rice + carrot). Scramble egg in separately and mix in. Add ghee, cumin tadka, turmeric, lemon. Complete iron-rich meal.
Egg + sweet potato mash	Egg yolk + boiled sweet potato + ghee + pinch coriander powder	Mash boiled sweet potato. Mash in hard-boiled yolk. Add ghee and coriander. Vitamin A + iron in one bowl.

Vegetable and Fruit Combinations

Dish	Ingredients	How to prepare
Spinach + moong dal + tomato	Palak + moong dal + tomato + ghee + cumin + lemon	Pressure cook dal. Blanch and puree palak. Combine. Add tomato puree, cumin in ghee. Lemon at end. Double iron, vitamin C boost.
Sweet potato + carrot + ghee	Sweet potato + carrot + ghee + pinch coriander powder	Steam or pressure cook. Mash together with ghee and coriander. Vitamin A rich.

Dish	Ingredients	How to prepare
Mango + ragi	Ragi + fresh ripe mango + ghee + amla drops	Cook thick ragi. Mash ripe mango and stir in. Add ghee and amla drops. Best iron + vitamin C pairing.
Pumpkin + coconut milk + rice	Pumpkin + coconut milk + soft rice + pinch cumin	Pressure cook pumpkin and rice. Mash with coconut milk. Add tempered cumin. Mild, naturally sweet, well accepted.
Avocado + banana mash	Ripe avocado + ripe banana	Mash both together. No cooking needed. Healthy fats + potassium + natural sweetness. Great finger food base.
Beetroot + apple + carrot	Boiled beetroot + cooked apple + carrot + pinch cumin	Steam or boil all. Blend smooth. Add pinch cumin. Vibrant colour, good iron, vitamin C from apple.
Papaya + curd	Ripe papaya + fresh curd	Mash papaya, mix with curd. Probiotic + vitamin C in one quick snack. No cooking needed.

Protein Combinations (8 months+)

Dish	Ingredients	How to prepare
Paneer + dal	Soft paneer + moong dal + ghee + cumin + lemon	Mash soft fresh paneer into cooked dal. Add cumin in ghee. Lemon at end. Calcium + iron together.
Curd rice	Plain soft rice + fresh curd + pinch cumin + tiny pinch hing (small amount)	Mash cooked rice with curd. Add a pinch of cumin and tiny hing. Probiotic + carbohydrate. Cooling and easy to eat.
Fish + rice + spinach	Boneless rohu or rawa + rice + palak + ghee + lemon + tiny pinch turmeric	Pressure cook rice and palak. Poach fish separately with turmeric. Flake fish finely, mix with rice and palak. Ghee and lemon to finish. DHA + iron + vitamin C.
Chicken + dal + rice	Boneless chicken (minced) + moong dal + rice + ghee + cumin + coriander powder + turmeric	Cook minced chicken thoroughly with turmeric. Pressure cook dal and rice. Mix all together. Temper with cumin + coriander in ghee. High iron + complete protein.
Tofu + vegetable mash	Soft tofu + carrot + sweet potato + ghee + pinch cumin	Steam vegetables until soft. Mash tofu and vegetables together. Add ghee and cumin. Good plant protein + vitamin A.

Avoid Before 12 Months — Quick Reference

Avoid	Reason
Salt	Immature kidneys cannot process it. No exceptions.
Sugar	Dental decay and unhealthy palate habits.
Jaggery	Contains sucrose — same effect as sugar despite being 'natural'. Causes dental decay and sweetener dependency. Avoid before 12 months.
Honey	Risk of infant botulism. No exceptions before 12 months.
Cow's milk as main drink	Low iron, high kidney load. Curd/paneer OK from 6m; milk as a drink from 12m.
Watery dal or rice water	Incorrect starting texture. Use thick smooth purees from Day 1.
Whole round foods (whole grapes, chickpeas, cherry tomatoes)	Perfect airway-blocking shape. Quarter or mash always under 5 years.
Whole nuts or nut pieces	Choking hazard. Smooth pastes OK from 6m; whole nuts after 4–5 years.
Fruit juices	High sugar, no fibre advantage. Avoid before 1 year.
Tea, coffee, cola	Tannins block iron absorption. Never for babies or toddlers.

Avoid	Reason
Sterilising utensils after 6 months	Not required. Hot soapy water washing is sufficient after 6 months.

Sources

WHO Complementary Feeding Guidelines 2023 | ASCIA Infant Feeding for Food Allergy Prevention 2026 | Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) Guidelines | National Institute of Nutrition, India | SACN 2018 (Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition) | Northstone et al. ALSPAC Study — texture progression and feeding outcomes | Canadian Paediatric Society 2024
For informational purposes only. Always consult your paediatrician for individual advice.