

**Hi, I'm Stacy Spensley, the Semi Crunchy Mama.** I became a holistic health coach in 2011 and worked with clients to support them to live healthier happier, lives. I'm passionate about holistic health that encompasses every area. Then in 2013, my oldest son was born. As a nutrition nerd, I was invested in not only feeding him healthy food, but also setting him up for success in a way that my clients' parents hadn't.

When I was pregnant, my husband convinced his parents to put some money towards a new Vitamix blender for me. He said he figured we could use it to make baby food. When I told him I had learned about another approach called baby led weaning, he was a little confused and asked if he should take the blender back. I said no, but neither of our kids ate what most people consider "baby food."

There is a lot of general advice out there about baby led weaning, much of it conflicting. What I've done is read a ton of personal stories, pored over a lot of studies and research, talked to my friends, and fed 2 kids of my own. My kids are currently 4 and 1, and each had unique experiences starting solids. Based on that information, I've pulled out what I think is most important to understand about this process. I hope you agree.

Here's what we'll cover in this course:

- The benefits of baby-led weaning (BLW) and how it's different from conventional spoon feeding
- How to tell when your baby is ready to start solid food
- Getting ready and first foods
- Foods to avoid
- Allergy concerns
- Plus tips, tricks and common questions

### **So what is BLW?**

Simply put, baby led weaning is a method of offering your baby finger foods for self-feeding from the very start of solids. Starting with purees teaches babies to

swallow first, then they learn to chew as you add lumpier foods. BLW has babies learn to chew first, then swallow as they figure out the eating process.

In the US we tend to use the term "weaning" to mean that a baby no longer drinks breastmilk or formula. That's not actually correct, however. At first, babies' diet is 100% milk, whether that's breastmilk, formula, or a combination of the two. As soon as baby starts even 1% solid food, the weaning process has begun, and will end at 100% food and 0% breastmilk or formula. The speed and duration of that process are up to you and your baby. I will generally use the term "milk" to refer to breastmilk, formula, or a combination, and "cow's milk" when I mean that.

### **Benefits of BLW:**

The biggest benefit of BLW is that it's less work. I have learned on my parenting journey that I will always choose the option at the intersection of "best for my kids" and "least work for me." You don't have to buy baby food, or make special meals just for baby. Your baby is introduced to a wider variety of flavors and textures, and practices his or her motor skills at mealtimes. It also encourages body autonomy and lets babies tune into their own hunger cues from the very start, leading to a healthier relationship with food.

This method is called BABY led weaning for a reason. I can't tell you exactly what will work for you and your child, but I can tell you what to look for so you can best follow your baby's lead.

Let's get started!

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