Stage 3 weaning:

10-12 months: Preparing for family foods

Around 10-12 months, sometimes referred to as stage 3 weaning, is when a baby is becoming further established on 3 meals a day, and solid food is becoming a more dominant part of their diet. The variety of foods, flavours, textures, and finger foods continues to progress, and families might be introducing their baby to modified versions of their family foods (without added sugar or salt) at home. At this stage, babies can be offered suitable main meals from the Nursery Kitchen menu, with food mashed, chopped, or adapted as needed to match their developmental stage.

During this stage, it's important to continue advancing food textures. Moving from soft, mashed foods to coarser, chopped textures encourages babies to practice chewing and biting, which helps strengthen oral muscles and feeding skills. Offering a variety of finger foods also supports self-feeding, allowing babies to explore different shapes, sizes, and textures while improving their coordination.

How much milk should a 10-12 month old have?

As babies become established on three solid meals a day, their milk intake may naturally reduce. However, the number of milk feeds each baby takes will vary, depending on their individual appetite and how well they are adapting to solid food.

Milk feeds (breast milk or formula) remain an important 'snack' between meals, helping to top up energy and nutrients – remember that babies don't need food snacks between meals until after 12 months. Parents and carers should be reassured that this transition happens gradually, and babies will continue to self-regulate how much milk they need alongside solid foods.

Stage 3 weaning foods

As with stage 2 weaning, continue offering foods from the four main food groups:

- **Vegetables & fruits**
- **Carbohydrates (e.g., potatoes, rice, pasta, bread)**
- **Proteins (e.g., beans, eggs, meat, fish, dairy)**
- **Dairy or plant-based alternatives**

At this stage, variety is key - exposing babies to a diverse range of foods, flavours, and colours helps expand their palate and ensures they receive a broad spectrum of nutrients.

Where possible, babies can now be offered the same meals, sides and second course as older children, provided they are suitable for their stage of development and the family agrees. Foods can still be chopped or mashed as needed, and many babies might begin experimenting with self-feeding using a spoon or baby fork.

How much should a baby be eating?

Remember, there are still no set portion size guidelines for babies at this stage, every baby will eat different amounts at different times based on their individual growth, appetite, and development. It's important to follow the baby's lead and let them decide how much to eat.

Encouraging responsive feeding, recognising and respecting a baby's hunger and fullness cues, helps build healthy eating habits for the future. If a baby turns their head away, pushes food away, or loses interest in eating, it's a sign they've had enough, and there's no need to encourage "just one more bite." Trusting a baby to regulate their own intake is the best way to ensure they get exactly what they need without pressure or coercion.

The importance of role modelling at mealtimes

Eating alongside peers and caregivers is a powerful learning opportunity for babies. They observe how others interact with food, use cutlery, and enjoy meals, which helps them develop positive eating habits and confidence with food.

Mealtimes should be relaxed, engaging, and pressure-free, allowing babies to explore food at their own pace. Role modelling positive eating behaviours, such as trying new foods, eating with enthusiasm, and responding to hunger cues, encourages babies to feel comfortable and excited about food.

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