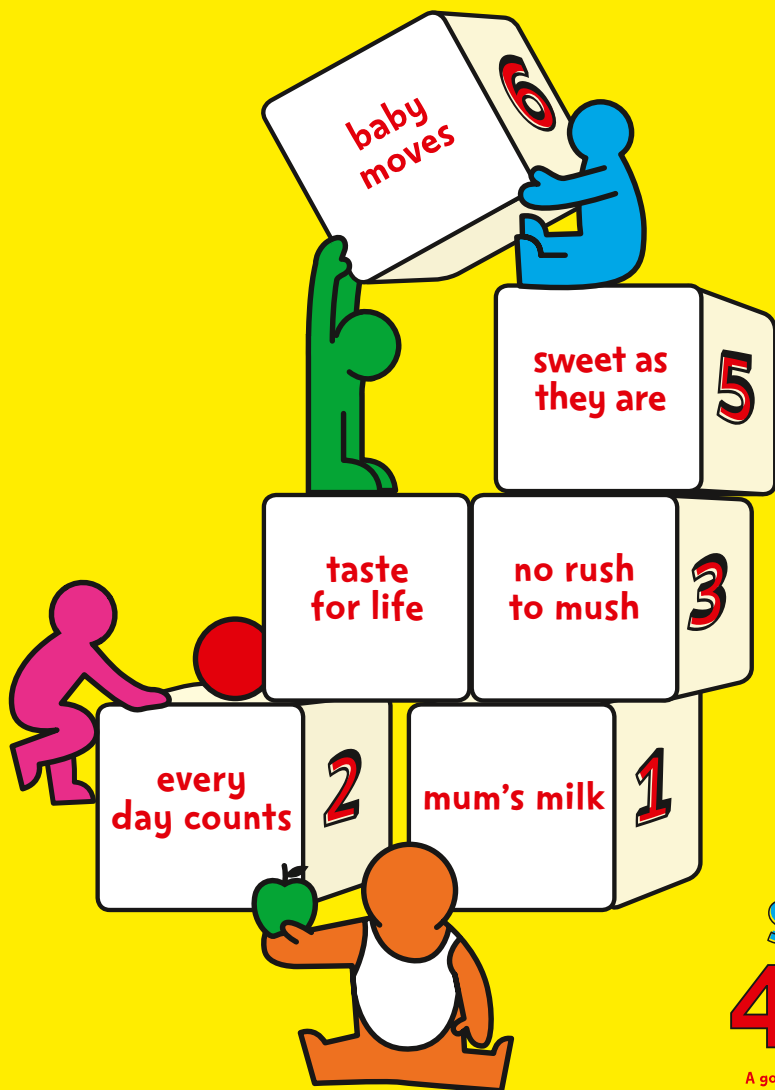


# building blocks for a better start in life



start  
4 life

A good start for a healthier life



# welcome... ...to start4life

## Happy, healthy babies start here

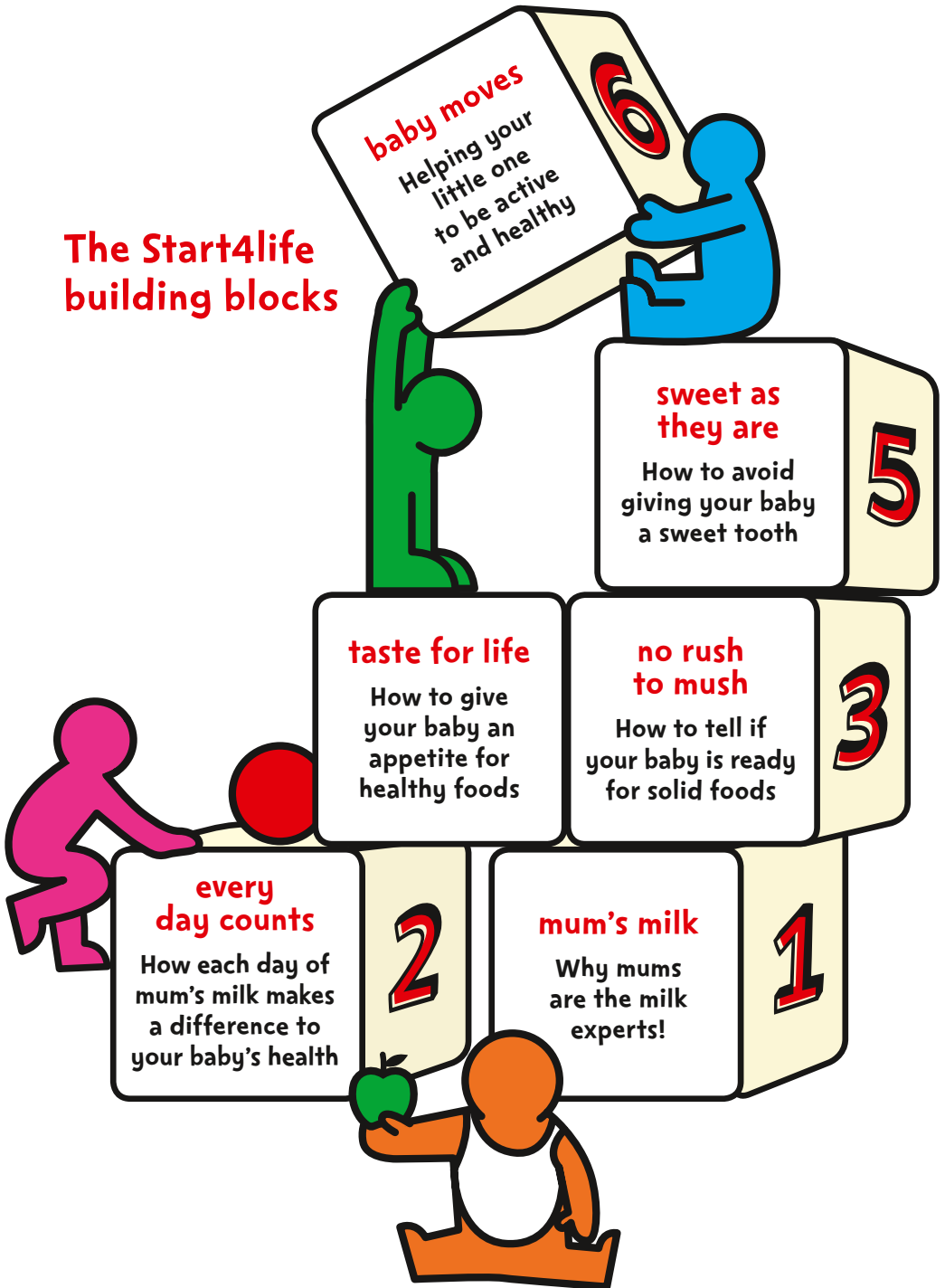
Welcome to Start4Life. We're here to help you give your baby a healthier start in life.

What happens in your baby's first years has a big effect on how healthy he or she will be in the future. Here are some Start4Life building blocks to help you know what's right for your baby.

If you have any questions about anything in this booklet or any concerns about your baby's health, please contact your health visitor or GP.

- The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months following a thorough review of scientific studies on the health, growth and development benefits of breastfeeding in 2001. This recommendation has been endorsed a number of times, most recently in a review by Kramer and Kakuma in 2012.
- The review found no evidence of any benefits of introducing food earlier than 6 months and no deficits in growth of infants exclusively fed breastmilk for 6 months.

# The Start4life building blocks



# mum's milk

## building block 1

### Why mums are the baby milk experts

Your milk is perfect and uniquely made for your baby's growing needs. Giving your milk to your baby makes a big difference to both your baby's health and yours. Infant formula is made from cow's milk and other ingredients. It doesn't include the ingredients that help protect your baby from infection and disease. Only your body can make those.

There's lots of support available to help you with breastfeeding; just ask your midwife, health visitor, or call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212\*.



### A very special recipe

Mum's milk is packed full of disease-fighting antibodies to help protect babies from getting ill. In the first few days after birth, it gives your baby a super concentrated boost of special infection fighting milk, often called colostrum. Even after the boost, mum's milk carries on giving your baby the extra ability to fight germs by providing antibodies against any infections you or your baby have been in contact with.

You can find out lots more information on breastfeeding in the Start4Life booklet '**Off to the best start**'. Just ask your health visitor or midwife for a copy.

## Breastfeeding is good news for babies as babies who are NOT breastfed babies have an increased chance of

- Diarrhoea and vomiting and having to go to hospital as a result
- Chest infections requiring a visit to hospital as a result
- Ear infections
- Being constipated
- Becoming obese and developing type 2 diabetes and other illnesses later in life
- Developing eczema

## Breastfeeding is good news for mums as:

- It lowers the risk of mum getting breast cancer and may lower the risk of getting ovarian cancer
- It naturally uses up 500 calories a day
- It saves money – formula feeding can cost as much as £45 a month

## Getting help

Almost all mums are physically able to breastfeed, but it can take a little while to get the hang of it.

It really helps to get someone to show you the right way to hold and feed your baby.

**Your health visitor or midwife is there to help.** If you have any difficulties or worries call them straight away.

**Call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212\*.**

**Go to [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)**



# every day counts

## building block 2

### How each day of mum's milk makes a difference to your baby's health

The latest research shows that each day and each week you continue to breastfeed, you're helping to protect your baby against infections to strengthen their ability to fight disease.

Each month of breastfeeding lowers the risk of illnesses that can put babies into hospital. It also helps protect babies against becoming overweight or obese, which means they are less likely to develop diseases like diabetes in the future.

Infant formula can't give your baby all this protection because it's not uniquely made for your baby. The longer you give your baby mum's milk the more they benefit, even when your baby is also eating solid foods from around 6 months.

### True or false?

#### Lots of mums just can't breastfeed.

**False.** The fact is, only 2% of women are physically unable to breastfeed but many mums find it difficult because often they haven't had the help they need. The good news is there are experts near you who can support you in finding helpful ways to hold and feed your baby.

Ask your midwife or call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212\***.

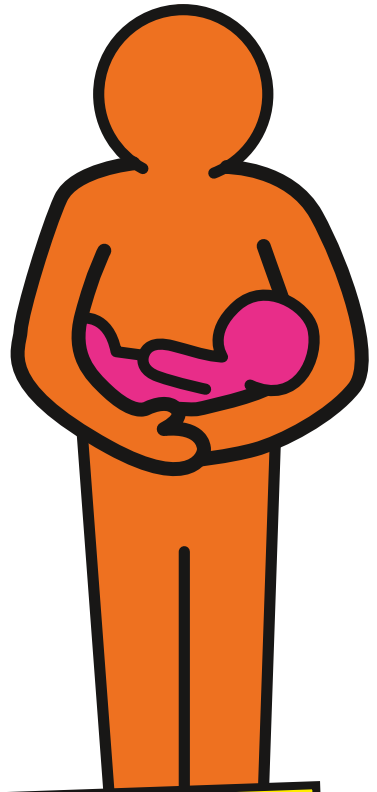


## Useful tips

- Breastfeeding is a great opportunity to get closer to your baby as well as a good chance to sit down and relax and grab a book or magazine, have a natter on the phone or watch TV
- If you have to be away from your baby – for example, because your baby is ill or premature, or because you're going back to work or study – you can express milk so that somebody else can feed your baby
- You'll probably feel quite thirsty. Have a drink beside you before you sit down to breastfeed. You can get expert help from:

You can get expert help from:

- Your midwife or health visitor
- The National Breastfeeding helpline on **0300 100 0212\***



### True or false?

**It doesn't make any difference if you top up your baby with formula after the first few days of breastfeeding.**

**False.** Giving infant formula can reduce the protection your baby gets from your milk. The more mum's milk they get, the more able they are to fight off germs and bugs.



# no rush to mush

## building block 3

Every baby is an individual, but there are 3 signs which, together, show it's time to start solids alongside mum's milk or infant formula. It's rare for these signs to appear together before 6 months.

### Your baby is ready if they can:

Stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady.



&



Co-ordinate their eyes, hand and mouth and look at food. They can pick up food and put it in their mouth all by themselves.

&

Swallow food. Babies who are not ready will push their food back out, so they get more round their face than they do in their mouths!





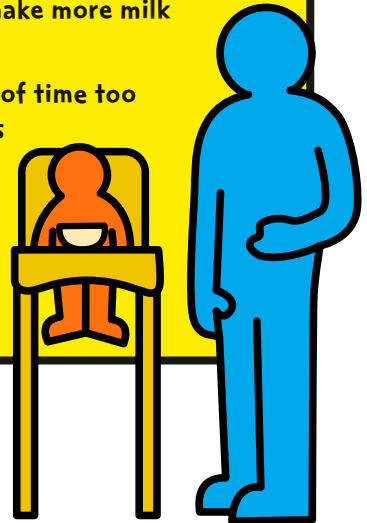
# Why it's best not to give your baby solid food until they are ready

It takes around 6 months for a baby's digestive system to work properly and cope well with solid food. If you feed them breast milk up to and beyond 6 months it gives them even more protection against infection.

Even if the label on the baby food says from 4 months, the latest research shows that your baby's digestive system isn't ready for solids until around 6 months.

## Top tips

- Don't worry if your baby starts waking in the night. They may be teething or having a hungry spell. Extra milk is all they need
- And don't worry about having enough milk. Just feed your baby when they are hungry – your body will make more milk to keep up
- Waiting till your baby is ready saves you a lot of time too as they will quickly be able to feed themselves
- Always stay with your baby when they are eating to make sure they don't choke
- You'll find lots of helpful tips on what to feed your baby over the page



## True or false?

**Babies who are big for their age need solids earlier than other babies.**

**False.** It's easy to see why people might think that, but this is generally not the case. Babies are ready for solids when their digestive systems are developed enough to cope at around 6 months.

# taste for life

## building block 4

When solid foods are first introduced at around 6 months of age, babies are more likely to try and accept new foods. Offer a wide variety of tastes – don't be discouraged if your baby rejects a food at first, babies often need to try a new food several times before they accept and like it. It can get messy but this is an important part of your baby's development. Food preferences and habits formed in early life are thought to track in to childhood and adulthood, so if you offer a healthy, varied diet to your baby, there's more chance they'll eat a varied diet when they're older.

Let your baby feed themselves with their fingers. This way they can show you how much they want to eat, and it gets them familiar with different types of food. It also makes eating more enjoyable. As a guide, the best finger foods are foods that can be cut up into pieces that are big enough for your baby to hold in their fist, and stick out of the top of it. Pieces about the size of your own finger work well.

You'll find lots more information on feeding your baby in the Start4Life booklet 'Introducing solid foods'. Just ask your health visitor for a copy.



### True or false?

**You shouldn't give your baby extra solids to stop them crying.**

**True.** Babies learn very quickly to use solids as a comforter, which could lead to weight problems in later life. So only feed your baby if they're hungry. Otherwise a cuddle or mum's milk is always best.

# First foods first!

Once your baby is about 6 months old he or she is ready to start eating some solid foods. This handy timeline gives you an idea of what you could give at each stage:

## From 0-6 months

Mum's milk or infant formula (follow-on formula is not suitable for babies below 6 months).

## From 6 months

First foods: Keep feeding mum's milk or infant formula, but don't give cow's milk as a drink. Fruit and veg like cooked parsnip, potato, yam, sweet potato, carrot, avocado, pear or cooked apple. Grabbable baby sized bits of soft ripe banana. Baby rice mixed with milk.

## Next foods

Healthy foods like meat, fish, pasta, noodles, bread, chapatti, lentils and mashed rice plus hard boiled eggs, full fat cheese and low sugar yoghurt, fromage frais or custard.

Whole cow's milk can be used in small amounts in cooking or mixed with food from six months.

## From 12 months

3 meals a day, chopped if required, plus milk. Try healthy snacks like fruit, vegetable sticks or toast and rice cakes too.

They can drink whole milk and have full fat dairy products.

Choose full fat because children under 2 need the extra fat and vitamins in full fat dairy products. From 2 years old if they are a good eater and growing well they can have semi-skimmed milk.

From 5 years old, skimmed milk is ok.



# sweet as they are

## building block 5

### **Remember not to add sugar or salt to your baby's food.**

Your baby doesn't need sugar. By avoiding sugary snacks and drinks you'll help to prevent tooth decay.

Babies shouldn't eat much salt as this isn't good for their kidneys. Don't add salt to your baby's food and don't use stock cubes or gravy as they're often high in salt.

You can give water with meals instead of sugary drinks and healthy treats like fruit or breadsticks. Non-food rewards are even better, like a trip to the park.



## Healthy snacks

### Instead of...

Chocolate  
Sweets  
Biscuits  
Cakes  
Pastries  
Ice cream  
Sugared or toffee popcorn  
Crisps

### ...Try

Canned fruit in natural juice  
Fresh fruit  
Unsweetened yoghurt with fruit  
Frozen, unsweetened yoghurt  
Frozen fruit  
Rice pudding or porridge (with no added sugar or salt)  
Baked fruit like apples and rhubarb  
Bread rolls, toasted bread, breadsticks, rice cakes, or bagels

It's a good idea to check the label as some foods like baked beans, sweetened fruit juice and flavoured yoghurts can be high in sugar and salt.

# baby moves

## building block 6

### Why it's important for all little ones to be lively and active

Being active takes brain and muscle power and plays an important part in your baby's development.

Babies love moving about but they can't always do it on their own.

That's where you come in!

- Play with your baby and help them do new movements and explore their surroundings
- The more they kick their legs, crawl, toddle (and walk, jump and run when they're older), the more likely they are to enjoy being active when they grow up
- If they burn energy by moving around it may help them to sleep too

Research shows that inactive babies have less opportunity to develop than active babies. So it's important not to keep them in a pram or rocker for too long. If they get used to being inactive it may cause weight problems when they are older.

Here are some ideas to help you get them going.



### Ideas for active play

Babies just love...

#### Cuddles and wriggles

Getting them out of their cot or rocker for a cuddle and a game of peek-a-boo is a great way of getting them to move their muscles. They also love kicking their legs and wriggling about, so put down a soft mat and give them lots of space to wriggle around and play.

## Singing and talking

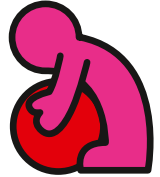
Babies love being sung to and talked to. So sing a nursery rhyme or a song, clap their hands gently or rock them to the rhythm.

## Playing

Any play is a great way for babies to interact and be active, even when they're tiny. Most leisure centres have mother and baby classes or soft play areas, or you can take them to the park or to your local baby swimming pool. Just playing at home with toys or mum or dad is great too.

## Crawling about

It's their first chance to explore and the living room is full of adventure! Make space for them to move freely, easily and safely by moving anything sharp, heavy or breakable out of their reach.



## Toddling around

Practice makes perfect so try and make sure your baby is free to toddle around (keep them away from stairs). And why not let them toddle along for a bit when you're out with them?



## Things to watch

It's important that your baby is free to move around. Here are some things to look out for.

### Baby signs

Babies can't move if they're strapped in a rocker or if their clothes make it difficult because they're too small or too big. Even little dresses can stop them moving. Watch for your baby looking fidgety and give them some room to move around.

### TV

Babies that watch too much TV will get less chance to be active, so try and reduce their time in front of the telly and encourage them to be active instead.

### Rockers

Babies who are strapped into rockers don't get the freedom to move around. It's fine to use them sometimes, but making a safe space for them to explore and wriggle around instead will keep them happy and healthy.

# We're here to help you

If you need to talk to someone about anything in this booklet, or anything to do with your baby's health, please ask.

## You can:

- Talk to your midwife or health visitor and ask them for one or both of the following booklets:
  - 'Off to the best start' – all about how to get established with mum's milk (2902351)
  - 'Introducing solid foods' (2903780)
- Call Start4Life on **0300 123 1021\*** or visit [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)
- Call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212\***

If you are a parent or carer of a baby aged 5 - 8 months then find out how you're doing at [www.nhs.uk/babylifecheck](http://www.nhs.uk/babylifecheck) and get some answers to those tricky questions we all have.

From the moment your new baby arrives they're discovering new things. And they are not the only ones. There's a range of support available at Sure Start Children's Centres, including access to healthcare, childcare and family support. And as your children get older there's further support available. Every three and four year old is entitled to FREE part-time nursery education for 38 weeks of the year, in Ofsted-registered nurseries, nursery schools, playgroups, pre-schools or with a childminder. It's also worth knowing that all local authorities offer FREE childcare places for some two years olds.

For further information visit [www.direct.gov.uk/parents](http://www.direct.gov.uk/parents)



**50% recycled**  
When you have finished with this leaflet please recycle it

\*Calls to 03 numbers should cost no more than geographic 01 or 02 calls and may be part of inclusive minutes subject to your provider and your call package. The National Breastfeeding Helpline is open from 9.30am to 9.30pm. The Start4Life lines are open from 9am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

© Crown copyright 2015. 2903776 Brochure 80K July 2015 (ANT).  
Produced by Williams Lea for Public Health England.



A good start for a healthier life