



SO EASY

baby food basics

**Homemade Baby Food
in Less Than 30 Minutes
Per Week**

Cheryl Tallman



So Easy Baby Food

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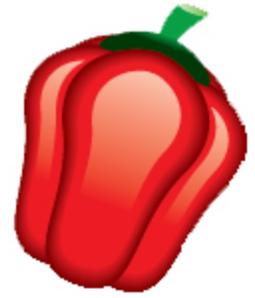


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Best Sources of Nutrients



Nutrient	Best Sources
Protein	Chicken, Dairy products, Dry beans, Eggs, Fish, Meat, Nuts
Carbohydrates	Bread, Dry beans, Pasta, Potatoes, Rice
Fat	Avocados, Butter, Cheese, Cream cheese, Egg yolks, Nuts
Vitamin A	Apricots, Broccoli, Carrots, Cheese, Fish, Mangos, Spinach, Sweet potatoes
Vitamin B ₆	Avacodo, Bananas, Chicken, Dry beans, Eggs, Liver, Meat, Nuts, Potatoes
Vitamin B ₁₂	Cheese, Chicken, Eggs, Liver, Meat, Milk
Other B Complex Vitamins	Avocados, Broccoli, Dry beans, Liver, Nuts, Sunflower seeds
Vitamin C	Broccoli, Cauliflower, Citrus fruits, Kiwi, Papaya, Strawberries, Tomatoes
Vitamin D	15 minutes of sunshine per day, Eggs, Fish, Milk
Vitamin E	Dry beans, Nuts, Vegetable oil, Whole grain bread
Vitamin K	Broccoli, Cauliflower, Egg yolks, Liver, Peas, Tomatoes
Iron	Avocados, Broccoli, Chicken, Dry beans, Meat, Spinach
Calcium	Broccoli, Cheese, Eggs, Fish, Sesame seeds, Yogurt
Potassium	Avocados, Bananas, Potatoes, Raisins, Squash
Zinc	Asparagus, Cheese, Fish, Mangos, Meat, Nuts, Peas, Spinach



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Healthy Eating Habits

Introducing solid food begins when your baby is about 6 months old. Solid food is, at first, an add-on to the main source of nutrition, breast milk or infant formula. Until your baby is 12 months old, solid food remains a secondary source of nutrition. If you don't know much about healthy eating, don't worry. You have about 6 months to begin learning. There is no better way to learn what's healthy than to make baby food at home.

Teaching your child healthy eating habits will have lifetime benefits. There is no better time to start than with the first bites of solid foods. Having healthy eating habits does not mean dieting. Unless your baby's diet is being watched by a healthcare provider, you do not need to count calories or choose low-fat or non-fat foods. It is really quite simple to form healthy eating habits. Here are some tips to get you started:

 **1 Be a good role model.** Babies learn through watching you and others around them. Be a positive force for your baby by eating healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables. Remember, your baby will respond to what you like.

 **2 Don't give up.** Babies' tastes change daily. The fact that your baby spits out peas one day does not mean he doesn't like them. Unless he has shown signs of an allergic reaction, try the food again in a couple days-you may be pleasantly surprised.

 **Offer variety.** All foods contain different vitamins and nutrients. Eating many types of foods will lead to a balanced diet. When your baby first starts eating, the amount is not as important as the variety.

 **Encourage drinking water.** Water helps the body digest foods. As your baby is introduced to solid food, the need for water is greater. At about 8 or

9 months old, offer your baby 2 to 3 ounces of water at each meal.

 **5 Don't be in a rush.** Many babies are slow eaters. At the beginning feeding time may go REALLY slowly. Allow plenty of time for meals so you and your baby can relax and enjoy your time.

 **6 Never force babies to eat or to finish all their food.** Your baby will eat when she is hungry. And she will eat the types of foods her body needs most. During meals allow her to eat as much or as little as she wants.

 **7 Avoid distractions.** Make mealtimes a family event. The whole family should eat together any time you can. This will help your baby learn to interact with others at mealtime and to begin developing social skills.

 **8 Be positive about vegetables and fruits.** Let your baby know what he is eating when you are feeding him. Talk about the vitamins he is getting and about how important they are for growing bigger and stronger.

Introducing Solid Foods

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the introduction of solid food at about 6 months of age. The introduction to solid food is a very important step in your baby's development. Making baby food is a great way to make sure that your baby is getting the best in quality, nutrition, and taste.

Fruits and Vegetables-One at a Time

As you start to introduce solid food, it is very important to watch out for allergic reactions to new foods. It is best to introduce foods slowly. There is really no reason to rush. You can simply follow the "One at a Time" plan: feed only one food to your baby for 3 to 5 days. This will allow enough time to see whether your baby has any allergies to the food. Once you know that your baby does not react to a food, you can move on to another one.

Food Allergies

You should discuss any food allergies in your family with your healthcare provider before giving solid food to your baby. A family history of food allergies may put your baby at higher risk. This just means that you may have to try foods in a different order.



Once you start feeding your baby new foods one at a time, watch for any changes in him. Food allergies can happen even if they do not run in your family. A rash is not the only sign of food allergy. Some common symptoms of food allergies include:

- Rashes, especially on the face
- Diaper rash

- Hives
- Runny nose, watery eyes, or sneezing
- Diarrhea, gas, or vomiting
- Fussiness or irritability
- Temperament changes
- Puffy eyes



If you notice any of these signs, stop feeding your baby the new food. Describe the signs to your healthcare provider. If she believes that a food allergy is the cause, be sure she writes it on your baby's health chart at her office. Most allergic reactions in babies are temporary. The problem foods can usually be reintroduced when the baby is a little older.

One way that may prevent food allergies is to delay foods that are known to cause allergic reactions. You can try them when your baby is older. Here is a list of the foods that cause allergies most commonly.

Wait until after 12 months to introduce:

- Berries
- Chocolate
- Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, limes, etc)
- Cow's milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Soy
- Wheat

Wait until after 3 years to introduce:

- Shellfish (shrimp, crab, clams, etc)
- Nuts

- Peanuts

Steer clear of processed foods until your baby is at least 12 months old. These foods can contain additives, artificial colors, and preservatives. These ingredients can cause allergic reactions in babies.

Foods Not Good For Babies

There are many choices of tasty, healthy foods for your baby, but not all foods are baby-friendly. Here are some foods that are not good for your baby.



Sugar, high fructose corn syrup, salt and caffeine	Delay introducing as long as possible	Avoid foods that contain these items as main ingredients.
High nitrate foods	Introduce over 8 months	Beets, carrots, green beans, spinach, and collard greens. Also hot dogs, ham, bologna, sausages, salami, and many other deli meats.
Foods that can contain disease-causing bacteria	Introduce over 12 months	Honey, un-pasteurized foods (i.e. apple cider), blue cheese, brie, and raw fish.
Frequent allergens	Introduce over 12 months,	Berries, chocolate, citrus fruits, cow's milk, egg whites, fish and shellfish, nuts, peanuts, and tomatoes. Processed foods with additives, coloring agents, and preservatives

	possibly much later	
Choking hazards	Introduce at 2-3 years	Nuts (other than finely ground); peanut butter; caramel; candy; gum; whole grapes; raw, hard fruits and veggies; chunks of meat; pieces of bacon; hot dogs; sunflower seeds; popcorn; raisins; potato chips; and hard candy.
Hot foods	Introduce after 2-3 years	All foods should be served cold, at room temperature, or slightly warm.



Mealtime Tips for Feeding

Baby food can be served cool, at room temperature, or slightly heated. Always test the temperature of food before feeding it to your baby. If you use a microwave to warm food, stir the food thoroughly before testing the temperature.

When you first start feeding your baby, plan on sitting with him and offering food for about 20 minutes at each meal. It is okay if your baby does not finish his meal. Sometimes he will eat a lot, sometimes only a little. Don't panic, this is normal. Your baby will let you know when he is done—common signs include:

- Pushing the spoon away from his mouth
- Hitting at the spoon
- Playing with his food
- Spitting food out
- Turning his head away

Choking can occur when your baby is introduced to solid foods. Protect your baby from choking hazards by:

- Always supervising him while eating
- Feeding him only when he is in a chair or sitting down
- Not allowing him to crawl or walk around while eating
- Avoiding foods that are likely to cause choking (see “Foods not good for babies”).

How much is enough?

When you begin solid foods, amount is not as important as variety. Don't worry if your baby is eating only a few spoonfuls of food at first. This is normal. Over the next few months, your baby will begin to eat more solid food. When she reaches 12 to 18 months, she'll be eating a combination of milk (either breast milk or cow's milk) and solid foods. The American Academy of Pediatrics provides the guidelines below for a baby's minimum daily food intake at about 12 to 18 months.



Food	Servings
Whole Milk	16-24 ounces
Fruits & vegetables	4-8 Tablespoons
Bread & cereals	4 servings (a serving equals ¼ slice of bread or 2 Tablespoons of rice, potatoes, pasta, etc.)
Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans	2 servings (a serving equals one tablespoon)



Getting Started Making Baby Food

Choosing Fruits and Vegetables for Homemade Baby Food

You can use fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables to make baby food. Buying canned or frozen food is easy, but choosing fresh produce can be tricky. Here are some shopping tips for picking the freshest items at the market:

- Choose fresh-looking fruits and vegetables that are not bruised, shriveled, moldy, or slimy.
- Don't buy anything that smells bad.
- Don't buy packaged vegetables that have a lot of liquid in the bag or that look slimy. Some fruits, such as fresh-cut pineapple, will have liquid in the bag, and that's okay.
- Buy only what you need because most fruits and vegetables are not "stock-up" items. Some, such as apples and potatoes, can be stored at home, but most items should be used within a few days.
- Handle produce carefully at the store. Keep produce on top in your shopping cart (heavy items on top will bruise fruits and vegetables, and raw meat products might drip juices on them).
- Set produce gently on the checkout belt so it doesn't bruise. Some items that may seem hardy, such as cauliflower, actually are very delicate and bruise easily.
- Wash produce just before you use it, not when you put it away.

Cooking Steps for Making Baby Food

1. Prep: Wash, chop, and peel fresh fruits and vegetables if necessary. If you are using frozen foods, simply open the package. If you are using canned

foods, pour them into a colander or strainer and rinse in cold water for one minute and skip to the puree step.

2. Cook: You can cook the food in the microwave or use the stovetop to steam it. Cooking times are listed on each recipe. If a fork slides easily into the food or it can be mashed with a fork, it is ready for the next step.

3. Puree: Pour the cooked food and the juices into a blender or food processor and puree. This is the most important step in making baby food. The food should be soft and smooth for your baby.

4. Freeze: Pour the pureed food into ice cube trays and cover them. Put them in the freezer for 8 to 10 hours or overnight.

5. Pop and Store: Write the type of food and the date on a freezer storage bag. Remove the baby food trays from the freezer and quickly run hot water over the back of the tray. Twist the tray to pop the baby food cubes out and into the freezer storage bag. Place the storage bag in the freezer. Frozen baby food cubes will keep fresh for 2-3 months in the freezer.

Serving Homemade Baby Food

Baby food should always be served cool, slightly warm, or at room temperature. It is easy to get ready for a meal. Simply select baby food cubes from the freezer and place them in a dish. You can use one of these methods for thawing:

- **Refrigerator:** Thawing food in the refrigerator is the easiest method but requires planning ahead. Simply place a covered dish containing food cubes in the refrigerator. In about 3 to 4 hours, they will thaw. You can warm the cubes on the stove, in a hot water bath on the counter, or in the microwave.
- **Microwave:** Thawing food in the microwave is fast. Simply place a microwave-safe dish containing food cubes in the microwave and defrost them. Some foods defrost faster than

others do. Defrosting two dishes of food at once may take a little longer.

* Warning: Microwaves create hot spots in food. When using a microwave to thaw or warm baby food, stir the food well before serving. Always check the temperature of the food before serving. Food that is too hot to eat can be cooled quickly by placing it in the freezer for a few seconds.

Thinning and thickening baby food

Most baby food should be a smooth texture. Different foods will have slightly different textures. For example, zucchini tends to be runny, and sweet potatoes are thick. Once your food cubes are thawed and ready to serve, you may decide that the consistency is not quite right and want to change it. You can mix different foods together to get the right texture or you can try one these tricks:

Thickeners: The quickest way to thicken baby food is to add vitamin-fortified dry cereal to it. This adds more vitamins to your baby's meal. Mashed banana, silken tofu, and yogurt are also great thickeners and appeal to many babies.

Thinners: The best way to thin baby food is to add breast milk or formula. Your baby is familiar with the taste of either breast milk or formula. Either of these thinners provides a good vitamin supplement to a baby's meal.

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