

Making Your Own Baby Food

Babies need only breastmilk for the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding is recommended for up to 2 years and beyond. When your baby is around six months old and consistently showing the signs of readiness, begin to feed iron-rich solid foods. As babies approach 6 months, they will start to show the following signs that they are ready for solid foods:

- Baby has better head control, can sit up without support and lean forward
- Baby can let you know when they are hungry (e.g., putting food in mouth) and full (e.g., turning head away)
- Baby can move tongue back and forth, side to side
- Baby can open their mouths for a spoon, and reach for, pick up and put food to their mouth



Why Make Your Own Baby Food?

- Saves money.
- Helps your baby get used to different tastes and textures.
- You control what is added to the food.
- Introduces food related traditions to your baby.

How Do I Make My Own Baby Food?

Be **CLEAN** and **QUICK**:

- **Clean** your hands using warm running water and soap before making any food.
- **Wash** vegetables and fruit before preparing and cooking.
- **Clean** all equipment or utensils in a dishwasher or hand wash them using hot, soapy water. Rinse and allow to air dry.
- **Cool** food quickly by separating it into smaller amounts.
- **Cover** the food once it has been cooked and put in the fridge or freeze right away.
- **Label** cooked food with name of food and date cooked.

Equipment Needed to Make Baby Food

- **To blend/mince/mash food:** blender, food processor, food grinder, potato masher, sieve, hand blender and/or fork.
- **To cook food:** oven-safe dish, microwave-safe dish and/or large pot (saucepan).
- **To check internal temperature:** meat (probe) thermometer.
- **To freeze/store food:** reusable containers, plastic freezer bags, plastic wrap, and ice cube trays or baking tray with parchment/waxed paper.
- **To label and date food:** tape and marker.



Baby Food Recipes

Protein Foods



Choose unsalted beef, chicken, turkey, pork and fish (such as sole, cod, salmon, haddock, tilapia, halibut).

- Choose plant-based protein options like plain, soft tofu and legumes (such as chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans and lentils).
- You can add herbs and spices without added salt. There is no need to add salt or sugar.

Remember:

- * Over-cooking meat will make it tough and hard to chew or blend.
- * Swordfish, shark, tuna steak, canned albacore tuna, marlin, orange roughy and escolar are high in mercury. Do not give your baby these fish more than once a month.

Cooking Meat, Fish & Poultry:

1. Take off the skin and fat. Remove bones and cut meat, fish or poultry into small pieces.
2. **Stovetop Method:** place meat/fish/poultry in saucepan with water. Bring to a boil then reduce heat and simmer until thoroughly cooked.
Oven Method: place meat/fish/poultry in an oven-safe dish with a small amount of water. Bake until fully cooked.
Microwave Method: place meat/fish/poultry and water in a microwave-safe dish and heat at high setting until thoroughly cooked.
3. Make sure meat/fish/poultry is fully cooked. The safest way to make sure meat/fish/poultry is thoroughly cooked is to check the internal temperature with a meat (probe) thermometer. (refer to: Safe Cooking Temperature for Meat and Seafood)

http://healthunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Safe_Cooking_Temperatures.pdf



Cooking Plant-based Protein Foods:

1. Follow the directions on the package to prepare *dried* legumes.
2. Rinse *canned* legumes in a strainer to remove salt. Canned legumes are already cooked and do not need to be re-boiled.
3. Stir fry, sauté or steam plain tofu. Check the label first – plain tofu may not need to be cooked.



After Cooking Protein Foods:

1. Drain the liquid and let the food cool.
2. Blend, mince or grind the meat, fish or poultry. Add breastmilk or water for a smoother texture.
3. Mash or blend cooked legumes or tofu with breastmilk or water. Add less liquid for a thicker texture.

Remember:

- * You can also offer your baby well cooked eggs (both egg yolk and egg white) and thinly spread smooth peanut butter on toast or crackers.



Vegetables and Fruit

When possible choose:

- fresh vegetables and fruit that are in season
- frozen, plain vegetables
- frozen, unsweetened fruit
- fruit canned in its own juice or water instead of sugar or syrup
- canned vegetables with less salt (sodium)

Babies do not need fruit juice

Remember:

* You can mash or cut lengthwise bananas, papayas, mangoes, melon, canned fruit and other soft ripe fruit without cooking them.

Cooking:

1. Wash vegetables and fruit well, peel skins, slice and remove any seeds or pits.
2. **Stovetop Method:** Place vegetables or fruit in a small amount of boiling water and simmer just until tender.
Microwave Method: Place vegetables or sliced fruit and a small amount of water in a microwave-safe bowl and heat until tender.

Vegetables - microwave on high setting.

Fruit - microwave on medium setting.

After Cooking:

1. Drain the cooked food and keep the liquid. Let the food cool.
2. Mash or blend the vegetables or fruit with a small amount of cooking liquid. The amount of liquid needed will depend on the texture you want.

If you plan to make pureed food, you can follow these sample recipes:

Food	Liquid*	Blending Times*
Vegetables: 200 mL (¾ cup) cooked vegetables	45 mL (3 Tbsp)	1 – 2 minutes
Fruit: 75 – 125 mL (1/3 – ½ cup) cooked fruit	10 mL (2 Tbsp)	15 – 45 seconds
Meat: 125 mL (½ cup) cooked meat	60 mL (4 Tbsp)	Until smooth

*Add less liquid and blend for less time to get a thicker, lumpier texture.

Storing Home-Made Baby Food

Remember:

- * Foods should never be left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Refrigerator: Home-made baby food can be kept covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Label the container with the name of the food and date it was made.

Freezer: Baby food can be stored in a refrigerator freezer for up to 2 months or a deep freezer for 6 months.

Freezing Baby Food

You can use a plastic ice cube tray or a baking sheet lined with parchment/wax paper.

1. Ice cube tray:

Place 2 tablespoons of baby food in each cube of the ice cube tray.



Baking sheet:

Drop spoonfuls of baby food onto the baking sheet.



2. Cover the tray or sheet with plastic wrap and put in refrigerator for 1-2 hours to cool.
3. Once cool, put tray or sheet in the freezer for about 24 hours.
4. Remove frozen baby food from the tray or sheet and put in freezer bags. Remove any extra air from the bag.
5. Write the name of the food and date it was made on tape and place it on the freezer bag. Return the bag to freezer.

Warming Baby Food

Thawing

1. Frozen baby food can be thawed in the refrigerator overnight or in a plastic bag that is placed in warm water.
2. Only thaw the amount of food that is needed for a meal.

Remember:

- * Never leave food on the counter to thaw.

Warming

1. An egg poacher, double boiler or a dish in hot water can be used to warm baby foods.
2. Stir while warming baby food. Heat baby food thoroughly until it is steaming hot.
3. Cool the food before serving. Be sure to stir the food and test the temperature on the back of your hand before serving it to your baby.



*** What feels warm to you may feel hot to your baby.**

Remember:

- * Never refreeze baby food that has been thawed.

Microwave Safety

- **Do NOT use a microwave to reheat baby food.**
- Food heated in a microwave may burn your baby.
- Glass jars may break during heating in a microwave.

