

Making Baby Food At Home

At about 6 months of age, babies need solid foods to help them get the nutrients they need. Making food for your baby is a great way for your baby to enjoy the foods your family enjoys. Home-prepared baby food is often lower in salt and sugar, can add more variety and texture, and can save you money.

EQUIPMENT

Various equipment can be used to make food for your baby. You can use a knife, blender, food mill or grinder, fine mesh strainer or sieve, potato masher or fork.

CLEANLINESS

Preparing food for baby requires even greater care than for regular family meals. Always wash your hands before preparing food or feeding your baby. Wash all utensils and equipment, including spoons, storage containers and the bowl, blades and base of blender or food processor, with hot soapy water and let air dry.

VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables and fresh, frozen or unsweetened canned fruit (ie. canned in it's own juice instead of syrup). If using canned vegetables, drain and rinse under cold running water to remove salt from the product.
- For best nutrition, vegetables and fruits should be left whole or cut in large pieces and then steamed or boiled. Avoid over-cooking. You can also bake or roast them until soft.
- Wash vegetables and fruit under cold running water before preparing.
- To steam: place in a steamer or wire strainer above a small amount of boiling water. Cover with pot lid, reduce heat to keep water just boiling and steam for as short a time possible to reach the desired tenderness.
- To boil: place in a small amount of boiling water, cover with a pot lid, bring back to a boil and reduce heat to keep water just boiling. Boil gently for a short time to reach desired tenderness.
- Mash, blend or press food through strainer to desired texture. You can also cut the soft vegetables and fruit into pieces to give as finger foods.



PROTEIN FOODS

- Eggs are a low-cost nutritious option. Mash hard-cooked eggs or cut into small pieces.
- Drain and rinse canned legumes or cook dried legumes according to package. Mash to desired texture.
- Bake, roast, steam, poach or boil until meat, fish or poultry is cooked to proper internal temperature and soft.
- Remove bones, skin and trim fat.
- Cut into small pieces and mash, grind or blend to desired thickness. Add breast milk, formula or water if necessary to moisten the puree.
- You can also serve soft pieces as finger foods.
- Avoid fried, breaded, cured or smoked products.

GUIDE FOR PREPARING BABY FOOD

Type of Food	Amount	Pureeing Time
Vegetables	200 ml (¾ cup) cooked vegetable + 2-3 tablespoons water	1-2 min.
Fruit	125-200 ml (½-¾cup) cooked fruit + 1-3 teaspoons fruit juice or water	15-45 sec.
Protein	125 ml (½ cup) cooked, cubed meat + 4-6 tablespoons water or milk	varies

Start by offering small amounts of food (2-3 tbsp.) and gradually offer more based on your baby's hunger and fullness cues. Let your baby show you when he or she has had enough to eat.

General Infant Feeding Guide

APPROXIMATE AGE (MONTHS)	FOOD	TEXTURE
0-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Breast milkExpressed breast milkInfant formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Liquid
6-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meat, fish, poultryIron rich foods like: eggs, beans, lentilsCooked vegetables/fruitRipe, soft cut up fruit like pears, mangoes, bananas, avocadosDeboned fishFinely minced or ground meatGrated cheeseBread crusts or toast <p><i>* Iron rich foods should be offered first around 6 months of age. Aim to offer them 2 or more times per day as other foods are introduced.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">LumpySoft-cookedFinely mincedPureedMashedGround <p><i>* Texture progression should progress quickly and lumpy textures should be offered no later than 9 months.</i></p>
9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pieces of soft-cooked vegetables and fruitSoft ripe fruits like pears, bananas, mangoes, avocadosIron rich foods 2 or more times per day, with increasing varietyIncrease variety of vegetables, fruit, grains and other protein foodsIntroduce full-fat (3.25% Milk Fat) milk products after iron-rich foods are offered 2 or more times per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ChoppedSoftGroundMashedLumpyPureed <p><i>* By 12 months, child will be eating a variety of family foods with various textures of tender consistency.</i></p>

Adapted from Pediatric Nutrition Guidelines, Ontario Dietitians in Public Health, 2019

GENERAL TIPS

- Do not give honey or any food made with honey until your baby is older than 12 months of age as this can cause infant botulism, a serious type of food poisoning.
- You don't need to add sugar, salt, margarine or butter
- Allow cooked foods to cool slightly before pureeing
- Cut cooked foods into one inch pieces or smaller before pureeing
- Add breast milk, infant formula, or water to moisten, as necessary
- Test for smoothness by rubbing a small amount between your finger and thumb

STORAGE TIPS

Refrigerator: Store baby food in tightly covered containers in the coldest part of the refrigerator for no more than 3 days. Remove the portion to be served at each meal into another dish rather than feeding directly from the container. This could spread germs from your baby's mouth into the food for next time. Any food that has been heated should not be refrigerated for another meal.

Freezer: Once the baby food has been prepared, it can be frozen in ice-cube trays or spooned onto cookie sheets. Cover the ice-cube tray or cookie sheet with plastic wrap and place in the coldest part of the freezer. Once the cubes or spoonfuls are frozen (it may take 3-6 hours to freeze), transfer them into freezer bags or containers and label with the name of the food item and date. Make sure all of the air is out of the bag to prevent loss of vitamins. Do not refreeze any thawed food.

Freezer Storage Time	
Vegetables	6 to 8 months
Fruits	6 to 8 months
Meat and poultry, cooked	10 weeks
Fish, cooked	10 weeks
Vegetable and meat mixtures	10 weeks
Purees containing milk	4 to 6 weeks