



Making food for your baby

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months of life. Continue breastfeeding for up to 2 years and beyond. Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs to grow and be healthy until 6 months. At 6 months of age you can start to introduce solid foods while continuing to breastfeed. For more information on how to introduce solids please see handout [‘Food for Baby’s First Year’](#).

Why make your own?

Making baby food can be a rewarding experience, and for many parents, it is an exciting time!

Making your own baby food can help you:

- **Save money**
- **Add variety** to foods offered to baby
- **Increase texture** to meet your baby’s changing needs
- **Introduce foods** the family is already eating



What do I need to get started?

You will need a little bit of time, a clean work area and some ordinary kitchen equipment. You can begin with the equipment below. A food mill, blender or food processor are not necessary but can make the job easier for some foods like meat.

To get started:

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds before and after handling food.
2. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counters in a dishwasher or hand wash with hot soapy and let air dry. Repeat this process after preparing each item and before you start to prepare the next food.
3. Wash all dish cloths used in food preparation in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

Cutting board & knife



Potato masher



Fork



Immersion blender



Start with iron-rich foods

Iron is important for your baby’s growth and brain development. By about six months, babies need more iron. Offer iron-rich foods daily as the first foods for your baby. Iron-rich foods include: beef, dark-meat chicken, dark-meat turkey, pork, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, edamame and iron-fortified baby cereals. Once your baby is eating iron-rich foods, there is no particular order for introducing other foods. You can introduce new foods every day, except for foods most likely to cause allergic reactions, which include milk, soy, egg, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, sesame and wheat. For these foods it is recommended you wait two days between introductions. *Do not give your baby honey before age one, even if it is cooked. It can cause a serious illness called botulism.

How to get the texture your baby needs

Babies need more texture than just purees. Provide foods that are “semi-solid” in texture. Give your baby: foods that are cooked until tender and then mashed with a fork; soft lumpy mashed foods; and foods that are grated or shredded or cut up into very small pieces. This can include small pieces that your baby can feed themselves. Continue to adjust the texture as your baby gets older.

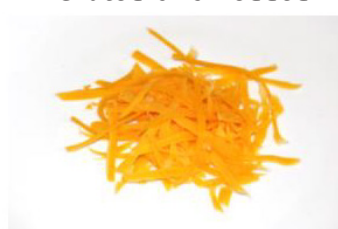
Pureed



Soft lumpy mashed



Grated or shredded



Small pieces



What foods to offer your baby and how to make them

Meat and Alternatives

Choose unseasoned ground beef, chicken, pork and fish like salmon, halibut, sole, haddock, tilapia and bass. If cooking fish, use deboned fish fillets.

1. Boil, steam, bake, roast, poach or stew meat until it is soft.
2. Use a probe thermometer to check the internal temperature. This helps to ensure meat is thoroughly cooked. Meat should be tender and separate easily from the bone. Remove bones and fat after cooking.
3. Cut meat or fish into small pieces and blend, mash, mince or puree if needed. To make it the right texture for your baby, you can add liquids such as breastmilk, water, or low-sodium broth.

Choose meat alternatives such as whole eggs, tofu and legumes (i.e.: lentils and beans).

- **Eggs:** Eggs can be scrambled or hard-boiled. Be sure eggs are fully cooked and no longer runny.
- **Legumes:** Cook dried legumes such as chickpeas, and lentils according to package directions. If using canned legumes, rinse well with cold water to remove excess salt.
- **Tofu:** Use plain, unflavoured tofu. Mash tofu or beans to provide the right texture for your baby.

Blend, mash, dice or puree cooked beans, peas, lentils or tofu to provide the right texture for your baby. To make it the right texture for your baby, you can add liquids such as breastmilk, water, or low-sodium broth. Do not add salt or sugar.

Cook



Cut



Blend or mash



Serve lumpy, blended texture



Cooking Temperatures

Cook food to a minimum internal temperature of:

• Whole Poultry (chicken, turkey)	82°C	180°F
• Poultry pieces or ground poultry	74°C	165°F
• Hazardous food mixtures	74°C	165°F
• Ground meats (beef, pork, lamb)	71°C	160°F
• Pork & pork products	71°C	160°F
• Fish	70°C	158°F

Use a probe thermometer to check cooking temperature.

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Vegetables and Fruit

Choose fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit without added sauces, bruises or blemishes. Thoroughly wash, peel, and remove the pit and seeds.

If using canned vegetables choose no-added salt varieties or rinse under water to remove excess salt before using. If you are using canned fruit, choose fruits packaged in fruit juice or water, not syrup.

For fresh produce:

1. Wash, peel, pit, seed, and slice before cooking.
2. Bring water to a boil in a sauce pan.
3. Add the vegetables or fruit and boil until tender or approximately 10 to 12 minutes. You can also steam vegetables and fruit until tender.
4. Remove the vegetables or fruit from the heat and drain.
5. Cut vegetables/fruit into small pieces or mash using a fork, potato masher, immersion blender or mill.
6. Add liquid (breastmilk, water, or low sodium broth) if needed to make the texture your child needs. Do not add salt or sugar.

TIP: Some soft fruits can be mashed or cut into small pieces without cooking.

For example:

- Bananas
- Mangos
- Avocados
- Ripe pears
- Ripe peaches
- Canned fruit, packed in water or fruit juice

Chop



Cook



Mash or blend



Serve lumpy, mashed texture



Grain Products

Use iron-enriched infant cereals rather than making your own or using adult cereals. Commercially prepared infant cereals contain a type of iron that is best for baby's digestive system. Start with single grain cereals such as rice, barley or oats so that you can trace the cause if your baby has an allergic reaction. Use mixed cereals/grains only after your baby has tried all the single grain cereals first.

Whole grain pasta, toast, homemade muffins and brown rice are good choices for your baby. Cook pasta and rice by following package directions. If needed, cut and offer small servings such as one to two tablespoons or more depending on your child's appetite.

Milk and Alternatives

Offer full-fat plain yogurt, cottage cheese and other pasteurized cheeses.

- Grate cheese or cut it into small cubes.
- Pasteurized milk can be used in recipes but avoid offering it as a main milk source before your baby is nine months of age.

How to store home-made food for your baby?

Once prepared, you can store home-made baby food in a small tightly-sealed container in the refrigerator for up to two days or in the freezer for up to two months. If possible, store food in glass or ceramic containers rather than plastic. If you store the food in plastic containers, cool the food first.

To freeze, separate food into small servings, label and write the date on each container.

TIP: You will only be using pureed baby foods for a short period of time. Freeze foods in amounts that you will be able to use.



How to thaw frozen baby food

When you are ready to serve frozen baby food, thaw it in the refrigerator. Baby food thawed on the counter can increase the growth of bacteria in the food which can lead to food-borne illness.

Once the food has been thawed, heat the food in a double-boiler or in a small bowl in a pot or bowl of warm water for a few minutes.

If using a microwave to thaw and heat, use a low setting until the food reaches at least 74°C or 165°F. Allow food to cool to luke-warm. Stir the food and test its temperature to make sure it is not too hot before serving to baby.

Do not reheat food more than once. Throw away any food left in the bowl that your baby does not eat. Do not refreeze thawed food.

How to Freeze Baby Food

Ice Cube Tray Method

1. Place about two tablespoons of pureed food in each cube section of an ice cube tray.
2. Cover tray with plastic wrap and put in freezer.
3. When frozen solid, take cubes from the tray and store in a freezer bag. Seal. Make sure all the air is out of the bag.
4. Label the bag with the type of food and the date. Return bag to freezer.



“Plop” Method

1. Line baking sheet with wax paper.
2. Take pureed food and “plop” about two tablespoons onto cookie sheet.
3. Cover with wax paper and freeze.
4. When frozen, remove ‘plops’ from cookie sheet and put in a freezer bag. Make sure all the air is out of the bag.
5. Label the bag with the type of food and the date. Return bag to freezer.

Recipe - Mixed Dish Dinner

Ingredients

- 125 ml (1/2 cup) cubed, cooked meat, fish, or poultry
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) cooked rice or potato or pasta
- 50 mL (1/4 cup) cooked vegetable pieces
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) breast milk or homogenized milk (3.25% M.F)

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients and blend or mash to desired consistency.
2. Serve immediately or freeze as directed. (See page 3)

Mixed Dish Dinner Combinations

- Beef, potatoes, and peas
- Chicken, rice, and broccoli
- Ground turkey, macaroni, and squash

Where Can I Find More Information?

- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit
www.hnhu.org
- Eat Right Ontario
www.eatrightontario.ca
- Speak with a Registered Dietitian for free by calling 1-877-510-5102

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