



# Safe Food for Babies and Children: Making Homemade Baby Food for Babies 6 Months and Older

This handout provides general guidance for making pureed foods at home, which can be a money-saving option or a personal preference. Making your own baby food has several advantages. You will expose your baby to more flavors, which could allow for a more adventurous eater. You also can limit sugar and salt to provide good nutrition for your baby.

## What do I need?

- A blender or food processor
- Spoon, fork and potato masher
- Empty ice cube trays or cookie sheets covered in plastic wrap or aluminum foil for freezing small, individual servings
- Food ingredients

## What ingredients do I need to avoid?

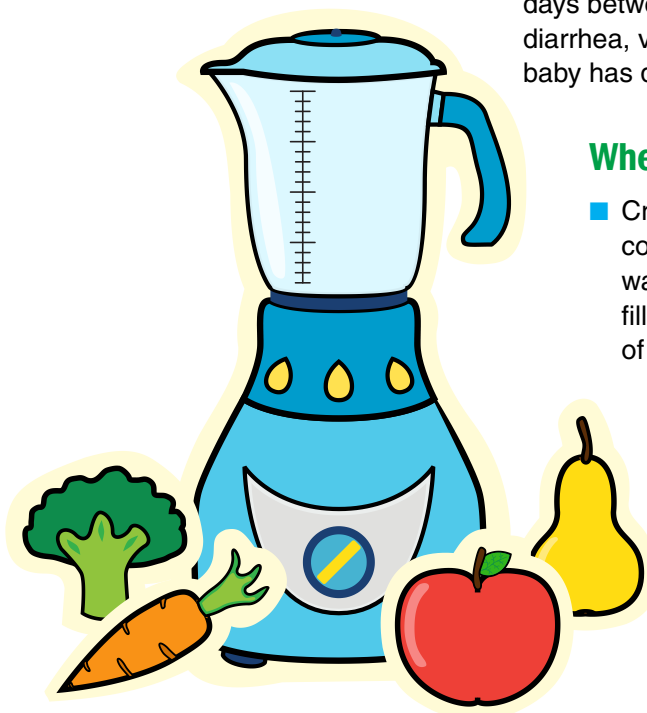
Avoid serving honey or foods containing honey because honey contains bacterial spores that could cause life-threatening illness (infant botulism). Fluid cows' milk should not be introduced before age 1. Some babies may experience allergic reactions to food such as oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, pineapple and tomatoes.

Experts suggest introducing one new food at a time and waiting for several days between new foods to check for reactions such as rash, irritability, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, breathing difficulty and stomach pain. If your baby has difficulty breathing, call 911.

## Where do I begin?

- Create a sanitary environment for food preparation. Wash the counters, equipment and your hands with soap and water. After washing, you can sanitize counters and equipment with a spray bottle filled with homemade sanitizer (1 teaspoon chlorine bleach per quart of lukewarm water). Allow to air-dry.
- Prepare fruits and vegetables:
  - Select the fruits and/or vegetables you wish to use (fresh, frozen or canned in juice).
  - Rinse fresh produce thoroughly before you begin.
  - Peel and pit the produce as necessary.
  - Cook all vegetables and any hard fruits such as apples.

*Tip:* Steaming, baking or broiling preserves the most nutrients.



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## Where do I begin? (continued)

- Prepare meat:
  - Remove bones, skin, connective tissue, gristle and fat.
  - Cook meat thoroughly to the recommended temperature (165 F for chicken; 160 F for beef).
  - Remove any tough parts or fat.
  - Cut into small, thin pieces before pureeing.
- Prepare eggs:
  - Serve only egg yolks to your baby. You can separate the egg before or after cooking. (Egg whites are more allergenic.)
  - Cook the egg until firm because serving raw or partially cooked eggs increases the chances of bacterial infection.
  - Reheating eggs is unadvised. Cooked eggs left out for more than two hours should be thrown out.
- Puree or mash all food thoroughly into a smooth consistency.
- Add water, breastmilk or formula to the food mixture to help create a smooth, thin consistency and familiar flavor.
  - Test the consistency by rubbing some between your fingers.
- Avoid adding salt, sugar or other seasonings.
- Refrigerate any unused portions immediately.
- Freeze portions after the food has cooled and been divided.

## How long is homemade baby food safe?

Food	Refrigerator Storage Shelf Life	Freezer Storage Shelf Life
Pureed (cooked) fruits and vegetables	2 days	1 month
Cooked meats or egg yolks	1 day	1 month
Meat and vegetables (mixture)	1 day	1 month
Thawed, previously frozen foods	1 day	N/A

Source: Foodsafety.gov

## Additional Resources

- Academy of Pediatrics - [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics - [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)
- NDSU Extension Service - [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/food-safety/pregnancy-infants-children](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/food-safety/pregnancy-infants-children)

## How do I thaw and warm the baby food?

- Thaw frozen baby food in the refrigerator.
- Warm according to directions provided in "Heating Solid Food Safely," a publication from the NDSU Extension Service (see [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) and type the title in the search box).

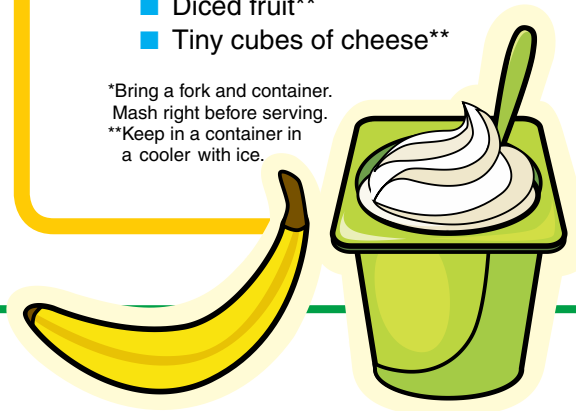
## Can I use home-canning for my baby food?

Canning is an option for baby food but only for certain types of fruits. Avoid canning bananas, figs, Asian pears, tomatoes, cantaloupe and other melons, papaya, ripe mango and coconut. Canning baby food requires a sieve or food mill. See the information about home-canned baby food in "Home Canning Fruit and Fruit Products," a publication from the NDSU Extension Service.

## Snack Options on the Go

- Ripe bananas\*
- Avocados\*
- Applesauce
- Yogurt\*\*
- Diced fruit\*\*
- Tiny cubes of cheese\*\*

\*Bring a fork and container. Mash right before serving.  
\*\*Keep in a container in a cooler with ice.



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