

Making Baby Food

Why?

- Easy and can be fun.
- Save money.
- Provide your baby with good nutrition.

Tips to Get Started

- When your infant is developmentally ready to accept solid foods (consult your infant's physician) and after they have been started on iron-fortified infant cereal, **start by offering vegetables, then fruits** (usually 6-8 months). Offer new foods one at a time and wait at least 7 days to check for an allergic reaction (e.g., a rash) before starting another new food. Offer foods with a spoon.
- **Use fresh foods if available**, but canned and frozen foods without added salt or sugar are also fine.
- **Wash your hands and clean all equipment** you will be using with soap and hot water, and rinse well before you start making baby food.
- **Mash with a fork or potato masher** (no special equipment is needed)! Some foods will need to be cooked first before mashing. You can also make baby food using a blender, food processor or food grinder.
- **If you taste the foods** you are preparing, use a separate spoon and not the cooking spoon.
- **Use extreme caution if defrosting, heating or cooking baby foods in a microwave oven, and always stir food well before feeding it to your baby.** Microwaves can heat unevenly and form hot spots that could burn your baby's mouth.

Carefully Prepare the Baby Food

- Wash, peel and remove seeds from fruits and vegetables.
- Remove bones, skin and visible fat from meats.
- Cook foods until tender and fully done. Do not overcook.
- Use only a small amount of drinking water (from a safe water supply) to cook the food, and cover the pot or pan.
- Save the cooking liquid for use in your recipe.
- Blend, grind or mash the cooked food. Add liquids (such as cooking water, juice, breastmilk or iron-fortified formula) or infant cereal to make it the thickness your baby likes.
- Be careful. Infants can choke on foods that are small or slippery (e.g., hard candy, whole grapes, hot dogs) and dry and difficult to chew (e.g., popcorn, raw carrots, nuts). Foods that are sticky or tough to tear apart (e.g., peanut butter, large chunks of meat) can get stuck in the throat.

The baby food can be made from the same food you make for your family, but take out your baby's portion *before adding seasonings*. Do not add salt, sugar, spices, butter or margarine, honey or gravy to baby's food.

Store Baby Food Safely

If baby food is not served right away, refrigerate or freeze it. Refrigerated baby food should be covered and used within two days.

Freezing Baby Food

Baby foods can be frozen in clean ice cube trays. Remove the food cubes from the tray when they are frozen solid. Put them in a freezer bag or container, and label with the name of the food and date prepared. Use frozen baby food within one month.