

Nutrition Facts

Homemade Baby Food

(From about 6 months)

At around 6 months, when your baby is ready to try solid foods, *homemade baby food* is a healthy choice. It is not necessary to buy foods specially made for babies and toddlers. Giving solid foods to babies before 6 months can lead to low breast milk intake and over-feeding.

Your baby will only need blended foods for a short period of time. It's important to provide a variety of textures and finger foods at 6 months. You can feed your baby lumpy, tender-cooked, minced, puréed, mashed and ground textures. Safe finger foods you can offer your baby include: soft cooked vegetables and fruit, ripe fruit such as banana, mashed cooked meat, grated cheese and toast.

What are the benefits of preparing your own food for baby?

- ✓ You can make foods with different textures.
- ✓ You can offer your baby fresh, local foods.
- ✓ You can offer a wider variety of new foods.
- ✓ You control the ingredients. You can avoid added preservatives, salt or sugar that could be found in commercially prepared baby foods.
- ✓ Homemade baby food can save you money!

What equipment do you need?

- Oven-safe dish, microwave-safe dish, large pot, and/or steamer.
- Meat thermometer.
- Blender, hand blender, food processor, food grinder, sieve, potato masher and/or fork
- Reusable containers, plastic freezer bags, plastic wrap, ice cube tray(s), wax paper and baking tray.
- Tape and marker to date and label homemade baby foods.



Before you begin Food Preparation:

1. Wash your hands with hot soapy water.
2. Clean all equipment/counters with hot soapy water. Dry with clean towel or air dry. Equipment can also be washed in a dishwasher.
3. Wash hands, equipment /counters again before handling/preparing different foods.



Vegetables and Fruit:

Use fresh **vegetables** that are in season whenever possible. Frozen vegetables are also a good choice.

- ✓ Wash vegetables well, peel skins and cut fresh vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes, asparagus, green and yellow beans and squash.
- ✓ Frozen vegetables such as peas, squash, spinach and kale are also good choices and need little preparation.
- ✓ Canned vegetables that contain salt are not a good choice.
- ✓ Instead: *look for cans that show “no-salt added” or “sodium-reduced” or “canned in water”.*



Use fresh **fruit** when it is available. Otherwise use unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit canned in juice.

- ✓ Wash fresh fruit well, peel skins and cut fresh fruit such as apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, bananas, avocado and melon into small pieces. Remove all seeds.
- ✓ Prunes, dates or other dried fruits can be placed in boiled water to soften.
- ✓ Try frozen fruit with no added sugar, like blueberries and melon, look for canned fruit like unsweetened pears, peaches and pineapple.
- ✓ Fruit canned in sugar or syrup is not a good choice.
- ✓ Instead: *look for “no added sugar” or “canned/packed in water or its own juice”.*



COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Canned fruit, bananas, soft ripe fruit and avocado do not need to be cooked before blending.

Many nutrients in fruits and vegetable are water-soluble which means important vitamins will “leak” out into cooking water. To protect nutritional value: **use small amounts of water** for cooking and **add the cooking water** when blending.

- To *soften* fruits and vegetables: boil/steam on the stovetop OR cook in the microwave in a microwave-safe dish in a small amount of water.
- Fruits like apples, pears, peaches and nectarines should be peeled and steamed or boiled before blending. This will keep them from turning brown.

BLENDING TIPS:

- Purée or mash vegetables and fruit with some of the cooking water until smooth. The amount of liquid you need to use depends on the texture you want.
- Some fruits tend to have high water content, so you may not need to add liquid.

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Meats and Alternatives:

Choose fattier fish like salmon and carefully remove bones. Buy chicken and turkey with skin. Choose higher fat cuts of beef, pork, lamb or veal.



The fat will make the meat more moist and tender – and will provide more calories and good nutrition for your growing baby. Do not choose low-fat, lean, or extra-lean meats.

Choose plain, soft tofu and legumes such as chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans and lentils. Choose low sodium canned products.



COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature of the meat to ensure it is thoroughly cooked (*see Internal Cooking Temperatures below*).
- Simmer chicken or turkey pieces in water until thoroughly cooked.
- Cook beef, pork, veal, lamb and fish in the oven. Use a small amount of water to keep the meat moist. Avoid using salt, high-salt broth and sauces.
- You may add herbs and spices (without added salt) to season.
- Dried legumes: follow the package's directions. Do not add salt to water.
- Canned legumes: rinse well in a strainer to remove some salt.
- Plain tofu: read the label, as it may not need to be cooked.

BLENDING TIPS:

- Save the cooking liquid and/or fat drippings to add while blending.
- After cooking meats: remove skin, cut away visible fat and take meat off the bone. Ensure all bones are carefully removed.
- Chop the meat, poultry or fish into small pieces using a food processor or blender. Add the cooking liquid/fat to moisten.
- For legumes and tofu, add a little bit of oil and water to reach desired texture.

Internal Cooking Temperatures:

	Degrees °C	Degrees °F
Beef, veal, lamb, pork	71	160
Beef-ground	71	160
Fish	70	158
Poultry-ground	74	165
Poultry-whole	82	180
Poultry-breast, thighs, and legs	74	165
Leftovers (any type)	74	165



Storing Homemade Baby Food:

REFRIGERATOR:

- Food should not be left at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.
- Place prepared food in a storage container, cover and place at the back of refrigerator for up to 3 days. Label the container with name of the food and the date prepared.



FREEZER:

1. Put blended baby food in ice cube trays or “drop” spoonfuls onto wax paper lined baking tray.
2. Cover the tray with plastic wrap and cool in refrigerator for 1-2 hours.
3. Put the cooled trays in freezer for about 24 hours, to form mini discs and/or cubes of frozen baby food.
4. Transfer the frozen food to a plastic bag labeled with the name of the food and the date it was prepared. Remove as much air from the bag as possible. Return to freezer.
5. **Never refreeze thawed baby food.**
6. Meat and Alternatives last up to 1 month. Legumes and tofu last up to 3 months. Vegetables and Fruit last up to 6 months in the freezer.



Warming Up Baby Food:

THAW: Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator overnight OR in a microwave on the defrost setting (in a microwave safe dish).

REHEAT: All baby food can be reheated in a dish of hot water OR in the microwave (see below).



Microwave Guidelines:

- Transfer the food to a microwave-safe dish. Do not use glass jars as they can easily break from hot steam.
- Heat on low heat for about 30 seconds or less.
- Stir well and test on the back of your hand to ensure the food is **warm**, not hot.
- **DO NOT OVERHEAT.** Pockets of steam can bubble and spatter when stirred.
- Food left in the baby’s bowl should be thrown away after the feeding.
- Do not reuse or save unfinished foods as “leftovers”.