

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN BABY FOOD

Making your own baby food will ensure that what your child is eating is fresh, nutritious and free of additives. By making your own baby foods, you'll be saving money, up to 50%. And to top it off, it's easy; making baby food at home is probably a lot less time-consuming than you may have thought.

In order to make your own baby foods, you'll need something to cook in. A steamer basket is cheap and by cooking fruits and vegetables in it, you'll be sure of keeping the nutrients in the food, instead of in the cooking water.

To puree your foods, you can use a fork, a food mill or blender. A blender quickly purees almost anything into the finest consistency. When your baby first starts on solids, you'll be pureeing things to a very fine consistency and, as baby gets a little older, you will make foods a little coarser.

You may wish to buy a food mill which comes in large and small sizes. It is very handy and inexpensive. The food mill strains most cooked foods to a very smooth consistency, although meats can be a problem as they will have a coarser texture.

As babies are susceptible to digestive upsets, you'll want to take note of the following tips concerning the handling of foods:

- always work with clean hands.
- always use clean utensils.
- prepare foods immediately upon removing them from the refrigerator.
- freeze immediately after cooking any foods you want to store.

You can prepare large amounts of foods at once and freeze them. Take your prepared foods and plop by spoonfuls onto a baking sheet. Freeze the plops right away and then take them off the sheet when they are frozen and put them into plastic bags. Label and date. You can also freeze the food in plastic "pop out" ice cube trays. Small tupperware jars with lids serve the same purpose and stack easily. Frozen baby foods can be stored

BABYFOOD

for up to two months.

When you take frozen foods out for baby, warm the food in a cup placed in a saucepan of boiling water with a lid on.

Cereals are typically the first foods given to a baby because they contain lots of iron. You can buy the commercial baby cereals, or prepare your own, by running oatmeal through your blender, for instance.

Fruits are generally given next. Except for raw, mashed banana, you will need to cook all other fruits till they are soft.

Try making your own applesauce and pearsauce; don't add any sugar, as these fruits are sweet enough on their own. You can also peel peaches, plums and apricots and boil or steam them.

Use fresh vegetables whenever possible in order to provide the best nutrition and flavor for your baby. Frozen vegetables are better to use than canned. Steaming vegetables is the best method of preparation. Carrots and sweet potato are two popular choices to begin with.

Yogurt, mashed cottage cheese, mashed pumpkin, baked potato, avocado and tofu (oriental soy bean curd) are all popular with babies. One good idea is to blend together cottage cheese, banana and fresh orange juice - delicious!

Meats should be added slowly. They can be boiled or broiled, then put in the blender with a little milk and perhaps banana or cream of rice to get the right consistency. Chicken is generally the first meat baby is introduced to and usually goes down fairly well.

There is no rush to start your baby on solid foods. Milk is his most important food. Your doctor's recommendations and your own intuition will help you to know when to begin introducing solids to your baby's diet. Always remember to be patient with your baby and allow at least a few days between newly added foods to make sure baby doesn't suffer any reactions.

→