

# Healthy and Flavorful Food for Baby

**At around six months of age, a baby's digestive system can handle solid foods. Give your baby a healthful start. Serve or prepare nutritious food that supports healthy brain and body growth.**

A baby's diet can include homemade food, commercially prepared baby food or both. Do not be afraid to try a wide variety of meats, fruits and vegetables. Vary the food textures. You can train your baby's taste buds to enjoy a variety of healthy foods.

Babies do not need bland meals. In fact, babies from other countries eat many flavors and foods. At about 8 months, start adding spices like thyme, rosemary, basil, oregano, cumin, paprika, garlic, parsley and ginger to baby's food. Add one new spice at a time. Wait a few days to see if your baby has any reaction.

Breastfed babies may benefit from foods that provide iron. At age 6 months, babies begin to lose their natural stores of iron. They need iron to develop motor skills and mental function.



Many parents start their 6-month old on a single grain, iron-fortified baby cereal. It could be a rice or oatmeal cereal. Use breast milk or formula to make it a thin semi-liquid. At first, your baby will eat only one or two teaspoons of cereal, one to two times a day. He will still get most of his calories from breast milk or formula.

In addition to cereal, you will also want to give your baby fruits and vegetables. Good vegetables for baby's first meals include potatoes, peas, corn, sweet potatoes, asparagus and broccoli. Avocados are also a popular first food. Just peel and mash the fresh avocado without cooking it.

Avoid homemade beets, collard greens, spinach, turnips, green beans, squash and carrots. They contain high levels of nitrates that can cause anemia in babies.

You can puree or mash fresh fruits without without cooking. Bananas, apples, pears and peaches are good first choices for baby. You could add the pureed fruits to plain yogurt for some extra calcium.

Meats such as chicken, pork and beef should be cooked and pureed. They are good sources of iron. Tofu is also a good first food and a non-meat alternative. You can make your own baby food quickly and easily. Cook and puree vegetables or meat. Use a blender, food processor, baby food grinder or fork. Breast milk or filtered water helps thin the puree, *if needed*.

Search the Internet for *baby-friendly recipes*. If you have questions about food or spices, talk to your doctor. Expand your baby's and your family's food choices.



***Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.***



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