

Making your own baby food is easy, efficient, and economical. Rather than spending money on prepackaged baby food, you can use fresh produce, grains, and meat that you have on hand.

## Making Your Own Baby Food

### Toddler Period



The rapid rate of growth in the first year of life slows during the second year. Correspondingly, your baby's appetite diminishes as well. She may express some very strong food preferences and refuse to eat foods she seemed to enjoy as an infant. She may show lack of interest in eating and dawdle for what seems like hours over her meal. She wants to feed herself but may be very messy with cup, spoon, and fingers. If a food is too difficult to chew, she will take it out of her mouth and not eat it. Cutting her food into easy to eat pieces will help.

Since individual children vary so much in their growth, activity level, and interest in food, the amount of food to feed and how frequently to feed vary too. In general, your toddler needs about nine hundred to eighteen hundred calories a day in her second year. The calories should be from a high quality, varied diet. Milk intake should be monitored by your baby's doctor. Some toddlers may not get enough milk, while others get too many of their daily calories from milk.

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Offering your child a balanced varied diet, including some high quality protein foods, and avoiding "junk" food is the best approach to feeding. Never force-feed your toddler. Even when it seems she is not eating at

## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

You'll need a tool to grind or puree the food. A regular kitchen blender or food processor will work, but a hand-turned food mill with different blades for various textures of food is best — and most convenient for making meals away from home.

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all, force feeding is not the answer; this approach may lead to the development of some unnecessary feeding problems. Let her natural appetite be her guide. If she is only offered good food, then when she does eat, she will eat well.

Each new stage of development offers new feeding challenges to parents. Remember that by offering your baby very nutritious foods, prepared and portioned in a way that is appropriate for her age, you are doing the very best you can to be healthy.

### Making Your Own Baby Food

The first foods you offer your baby should be smooth in texture and thin in consistency. Initially, solid foods should, therefore, be offered to her in a very liquid form—that is, pureed. At about seven or eight months, your baby is able to manage soft chunks of food with some substance [such as bits of cheese, flakes of fish, peas and Cheerios], which she can get from the family table. As a result, pureeing your baby's food is a temporary task.

What is the difference between commercial and homemade baby food? The difference really depends on the quality of the foods used to make the baby food, the care given to preserve the vitamin and mineral content, and the amount of salt, sugar, preservatives, and spices that have been added to the food. In general, homemade baby food is often denser in calories. That is, it often is thicker and has less water. Commercial baby food is required by law to list the ingredients contained in each jar. You will notice that in response to parents' wishes, commercial baby food now rarely contains added salt, sugar, spices or preservatives.

Homemade baby food may have a higher vitamin and mineral content than commercial baby food if it is made from the very freshest foods and if it is served soon after preparation. A long shelf life and exposure to light may reduce the vitamin content of commercial baby food.

In the preparation of commercial baby food, care is taken to be certain the food is free of bacteria and other organisms that could make your baby sick. Homemade baby food is safe; too, if a high standard of cleanliness is used in its preparation.

If you decide to make your own baby food, the following method may be helpful.

### Preparing Your Own Baby Food with a Blender or Food Processor

1. Use the freshest and best foods available. Avoid canned foods that are high in salt and additives. Avoid using foods that have added sugar, spices, preservatives, or fat, and don't add these ingredients yourself.
2. Wash your hands carefully before you handle the food or equipment.
3. Make sure all the cooking utensils, the cutting board, and the blender or food processor is very clean. You can do this by scrubbing all equipment with hot, soapy water and rinsing it well.
4. Prepare the food for cooking by washing fruits and vegetables well and removing skins, pit, and seeds. Remove the fat, skin, and bones from meats.

5. Cook the food by steaming or boiling in a very small amount of water in a covered pot. Cook until tender.

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get the right consistency. You will discover that as your baby grows older, she prefers foods from your table since she wants to eat the same foods she sees you eating.

6. Add a cup of the cooked food to the blender or processor and puree with just enough of the cooking liquid to allow the blades to spin. Add more cooking liquid or water if necessary.
7. Some foods do not need to be cooked. Fresh peaches, pears, and bananas are examples. These may be processed by cutting the peeled fruits into chunks and then pureeing.
8. The pureed food may be served right away. The remainder should be stored carefully for later use.
9. To store the pureed food, place serving size portions in an ice-cube tray, a paper cupcake liner, or a glass dish or on a piece of plastic wrap and freeze. Two tablespoons is an arbitrary serving size. Make the servings larger or smaller depending on what your baby eats.
10. To serve stored food, reheat the individual portions. Microwave ovens can be dangerous since they may create hotspots in the cooked food, which can burn your baby's mouth. Be sure to cool the food to a safe temperature before feeding.

Once your baby no longer requires pureed food, a baby food grinder is a convenient way to make baby food right at the table. The grinder should be very clean, and the food used in the grinder should be very fresh, unsalted, and without spices, fat, or skins. Place the right portion in the grinder, adding water or cooking water as needed to