



Introducing the colourful world of
fresh fruit and vegetables
to babies and toddlers

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The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust encourages all New Zealanders to eat five or more servings of fresh fruit and vegetables every day for health and vitality.

Happy babies and toddlers need the right nutrition for growth and development.

The following information will help you introduce the colourful world of fresh fruit and vegetables to your baby and toddler, setting them up for future healthy habits.

Introducing a variety of fruit and vegetables from an early age encourages babies to learn about and enjoy different tastes and textures. By the time your child is four years old they should be enjoying at least four servings of fruit and vegetables each day.

A serving is about a handful, we use our own hand to measure, meaning a child's serving will be smaller than an adult's.



It can take up to
15 TIMES
before babies
and toddlers
like the taste
of new foods

What the experts say

Experts believe it can take up to 15 times before babies and toddlers like the taste of new foods, especially when it comes to vegetables. Don't give up, wait a few days and try again, perseverance is key.

The Ministry of Health suggests:

- Breast milk is best, if you are not breastfeeding, use infant formula until your baby is 12 months old
- Start with healthy habits early
- Give babies and toddlers plenty to drink, no: juice, fizzy drinks, flavoured milks, tea or coffee
- Start solid food when your baby is ready – at around six months old
- Change the variety, texture and quantity of food as your baby grows
- Once your baby starts solid food in their high chair, try having meals together as a family. Family mealtimes can be important for learning and development



Frequently asked questions

Should babies and toddlers have extra vitamins?

Unless recommended by your GP, babies and toddlers should get all their vitamin and mineral needs from breast milk or infant formula and eating a variety of foods from each of these food groups:

- Fruit and vegetables
- Breads and cereals
- Milk and milk products
- Lean meat, chicken, eggs, beans and lentils

Can my baby or toddler eat the vegetables cooked for the family dinner?

It's great to eat together as a family but remember not to add salt.

Can I bring my baby or toddler up as a vegetarian?

Yes, but it is important that you get dietary advice from a doctor or dietitian, as babies need a different nutritional balance than adults.

Should I worry about my baby or toddler choking?

Babies have small air and food passages and are still learning to chew and swallow.

To reduce the risk of choking:

- Babies and toddlers should always be sitting when eating
- Babies need supervision when eating
- Follow the guidelines on the next page for suitable foods for different ages.

My baby/toddler won't eat vegetables

Don't worry – it can be common, especially as toddlers get older. Keep trying a variety of vegetables over time, offering a **new one every two to four days**. Try combining a new vegetable with a preferred one or offer pieces of soft fruit as an alternative.



Why does my baby need to eat iron-rich foods?

Babies need lots of iron because they are growing so rapidly. Iron helps babies develop physically, is essential for brain development and helps them fight infection. Iron also helps children to learn.

Lean meat, chicken and fish share good sources of iron. Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables contain iron. Broad beans, leeks and spinach all provide a source of iron meaning they contain over 10% of our recommended daily intake.

Other fruit and vegetables that contain useful amounts of iron are: avocados, blackberries, cherries, mangos, peaches, broccoli, broccolini, butternut, cabbage, courgette, kūmara, peas, silver beet, sweet corn and taro.



Iron and fruit and vegetables



Most fruit and vegetables provide vitamin C which helps the body absorb up to four times more iron. Adding fruit and vegetables to meals with lean meat and fish is a great way to increase iron uptake.

Vitamin C rich fruit and vegetables



| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| APPLES | BROCCOLI & BROCCOLINI |
| BLACKBERRIES | CAPSICUM |
| CHERRIES | CAULIFLOWER |
| CITRUS FRUIT | BROAD BEANS |
| FEIJOAS | BUTTERNUT SQUASH |
| GRAPEFRUIT | CABBAGE |
| HONEYDEW MELON | COURGETTE |
| KIWIBERRIES | FENNEL |
| GREEN & GOLD KIWIFRUIT | KALE |
| MANGOS | KOHLRABI |
| PEACHES | LEEKS |
| PINEAPPLE | PEAS |
| ROCKMELON | POTATOES |
| STRAWBERRIES | PŪHĀ |
| TAMARILLOS | PUMPKIN |
| | RHUBARB |
| | SILVER BEET |
| | SNOW PEAS |
| | SWEDES |
| | TOMATOES |
| | TURNIP |
| | WATERCRESS |

Breast milk or infant formula gives your baby all the nutrients they need up to around 6 months old. From this time, babies start to need solid food. Discuss starting solids with a health professional, use the following information as a guide for introducing fruit and vegetables.

At about 6 months

Introduce solids **when** your baby can:

- Hold their head up
- Sit with less help
- Put their hands in their mouth often
- Open their mouth when a spoon touches their lips or as they see the spoon coming
- Doesn't spit the food out
- Make chewing movements

How to offer solid foods:

- Offer solids to your baby when they are happy and not tired
- Offer breast or formula milk first then use solids as a top up
- Try portions of about 1/2 to 2 teaspoons first and gradually increase the amount until your baby is having about 3 to 4 teaspoons as a meal
- Introduce one new food every two to four days to ensure your baby doesn't have an allergy to that food
- Remember – it can take up to 15 tries for a baby, toddler or child to accept a new taste!
- Babies like their food plain, although you can try adding a little puréed apple or pear to add a slight sweetness. Don't add salt, fat or sugar to babies' food as they will develop a preference for this taste
- Hold your baby while you feed them or sit them in a high chair
- Babies are good at knowing when they have eaten enough, look for your baby's cues they are full

Practical tips and ideas:

- Rinse fruit and vegetables under running water
- Cut into even sized pieces
- Purée fruit without skins, pips or seeds, e.g. apple, avocado, banana, pear or mango
- For vegetables, boil, steam or microwave until soft
- Purée or push cooked fruit and vegetables through a sieve so they are a smooth texture
- Use expressed breast milk or infant formula to thin purées
- Serve luke warm – check temperature so it's not too hot
- Prepare vegetables and freeze in small portions. When ready to use, thaw a portion

For first vegetables choose from potato, kūmara, pumpkin, carrot, marrow and courgette. For first fruit choose from avocado, banana, apple and pear.



7 to 8 months old

Introduce mashed food, finger food and new flavours **when** your baby can:

- Sit without support
- Pick up and bring food to their mouth
- Has some teeth
- Bite and chew

How:

- Offer breast milk or infant formula first then offer solids as a top up
- Remove stalks and stringy bits from vegetables such as silver beet, bok choy and pūhā
- Offer soft finger foods in pieces that can be easily picked up by your baby

Introduce cooked vegetables like cauliflower, broccoli, yams, peas, courgette, mushrooms, pūhā, taro, silver beet and spinach, removing stringy bits first.

Practical tips and ideas:

- Mash fruit with a little plain yoghurt, cook fruit to soften if needed
- Mash well-cooked vegetables with puréed cooked meat, fish or legumes
- Cut banana and cooked pumpkin for soft finger food
- Stew apples and pears together and blend for home-made baby food



Mash different vegetables together to introduce new tastes

8 to 12 months old

Introduce different texture and lumpy foods **when your baby can:**

- Begin to crawl and tries to pull themselves up to stand
- Bite and chew soft lumps
- Shows interest in a range of foods

How:

- Offer solid foods before breast milk or infant formula
- Introduce more texture or lumps in their food
- Mash cooked fruit and vegetables with a fork instead of puréeing
- Try a new fruit or vegetable one at a time; mix a new type with a known favourite
- Remember, it can take up to 15 times before your baby likes something new

Introduce slightly firmer finger foods such as kiwifruit, kūmara, finely grated raw carrot, apple and mashed banana and avocado on toast fingers.

Practical tips and ideas:

- Add chopped soft fruit to yoghurt or custard
- Add stewed apple to porridge with breast milk or infant formula
- Wrap fruit or vegetables in a piece of muslin cloth. This will stop pieces breaking off. E.g. apples, pears, oranges, pineapple etc. work well like this



Toddlers (from 12 months)

Introduce a range of spoon and finger foods **when your baby can:**

- Use their hands and fingers to feed themselves
- Hold a cup with two hands and drink from it
- Has molar teeth starting to appear (the large teeth at the back)

How:

- Offer breast milk, infant formula or dark blue top cow's milk between meals
- Serve vegetables raw and/or cooked and try fruit and vegetables in new ways or cut them into new shapes – make it interesting!
- Offer a wide range and introduce new varieties – try fruit and vegetables that may not have been a hit the first time around
- Offer small amounts of the same food as the family – without salt or added sugar

Try roasting capsicums, courgettes, beetroot and eggplant. Start with small amounts.

Practical tips and ideas

- Finely chopped salad vegetables e.g. lettuce, cucumber, capsicum etc.
- Soft, slightly mashed, cooked peas and beans
- Carrot, apple or celery – finely grated or cooked until soft
- Banana on toast
- Soft fruit with yoghurt
- Roast pumpkin, potatoes and kūmara



Meal ideas to try as children get older:

- Mix together avocado and banana on toast
- Mexican can work well, try tortillas and soft tacos with vegetables – serve a selection of sliced cucumber, grated carrots, tomato wedges etc. and let the children make their own
- Bake pumpkin and kūmara and mash together
- Add mashed cauliflower or parsnip with potato for cottage pie
- Pawpaw, mango and banana make a sweet treat
- Add finely chopped vegetables such as broccoli and courgette to pasta bakes
- Add grated vegetables such as beetroot and carrot to mini burger patties and meatballs
- Potato wedges baked in the oven are a universal hit with young children, try kūmara, parsnip, carrot or pumpkin wedges
- Make colourful vegetables cups with capsicum, cucumber and baby carrot with hummus
- Blend yoghurt and fruit such as mango, berries and pineapple and freeze in ice-block moulds
- Cook finely chopped vegetables such as tomato, courgette and mushroom into mini frittatas



Fresh recipe ideas with vitamin C and iron

Apple and cauliflower purée or mash

The sweet taste of apple will encourage babies to try cauliflower if they haven't before. Serve with baby cereal or baby rice for iron.

Ingredients

1 fresh apple peeled, chopped and rinsed

1 cup fresh cauliflower, chopped into small florets and rinsed

1/2 cup water, approximately

Method

Place cauliflower and apple in the pot, cover with water and cook until both apple and cauliflower are tender, around 4 minutes.

Remove from pot, retaining a little of the cooking water.

Add to a blender with a little of the water and breast milk or infant formula.

Blend to a purée and serve (for babies over 7 months).



Peel and cube apple and chop cauliflower into florets



Place in a pot, cover with water and cook until tender



Purée, mash or chop depending on your babies age

Chicken, pumpkin and spinach - purée or mash to suit age of your baby

Ingredients

- 2 cups of peeled and cubed pumpkin
- 2 handfuls of chopped fresh spinach, stalks and stringy pieces removed, and rinsed
- 2 potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 400g lean chicken mince
- Olive oil
- 1/2 cup of water – approximately

Method

Cook chicken mince in a little olive oil for about 5 minutes or until cooked through. Place all ingredients in a pot and bring to the boil with the lid on, when boiling remove the lid. Turn heat down and simmer gently for about 45 minutes.

6-7 months: Put in blender with a little breast milk or infant formula and water used to cook vegetables. Blend until smooth

7-8 months: Mash together with a fork and a little breast milk or infant formula

NB: You may find it is useful to cook a larger batch of puréed meals, such as these ones, then freeze in smaller portions to use later. Purées can be frozen in an ice cube tray, when frozen transfer to a plastic bag, seal and return to the freezer.

Keeping cooking with chicken safe

Cross contamination can be a major cause of food-borne illnesses. To keep chicken safe for the whole family when cooking with it you should make sure you:

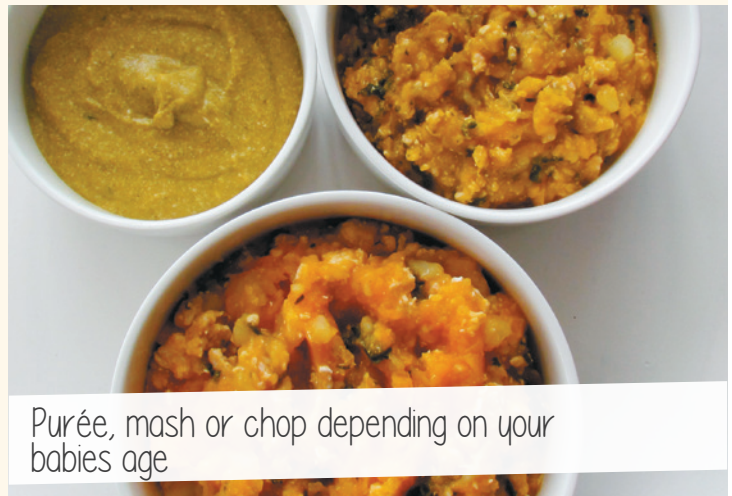
- Wash your hands thoroughly in hot, soapy water before you start
- Keep plates and utensils for raw and cooked chicken separate
- Wash and dry knives and chopping boards thoroughly in hot soapy water
- Cook poultry well until juices run clear, not pink



Cook chicken in a little oil until completely cooked (white not pink)



Chop vegetables to the same size so they cook together



Purée, mash or chop depending on your babies age

One pot vegetables with mince

This meal can be made for the whole family and blended for babies.

Ingredients

- 2 kūmara, peeled and cubed
- 2 potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1/4 pumpkin, peeled and cubed
- 2 handfuls of chopped fresh spinach, stalks and stringy pieces removed, and rinsed
- 1 carrot, rinsed and grated
- 400g lean mince
- 3 cups water or enough to cover all ingredients in the pot

Method

Place all ingredients in a pot and add water to cover and bring to a slow boil with the lid on, when boiling remove the lid.

Simmer gently for about 45 minutes, stirring often, until soft and thick but still moist.

- 6 months: Purée together with breast/infant milk to a smooth consistency
- 7 to 8 months: Mash
- 8 to 12 months: Finely chop



Chop vegetables to the same size so they cook together



Place all ingredients in a large pot and cover with water



Purée, mash or chop depending on your baby's age



Children often
take time to like
fruit and vegetables

Go with the flow
and don't worry if
your children aren't
eating enough fruit
and vegetables.
Continue to offer
them regularly

Allow children to
serve and choose
their own fruit and
vegetables



Bright ideas
and tips as
they grow

Lead by example,
let your children see
you eating
and enjoying
different produce

Have fun
at meal times

Growing vegetables
can make children
more interested
in eating them

Include your
children in buying,
preparing and
cooking vegetables



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