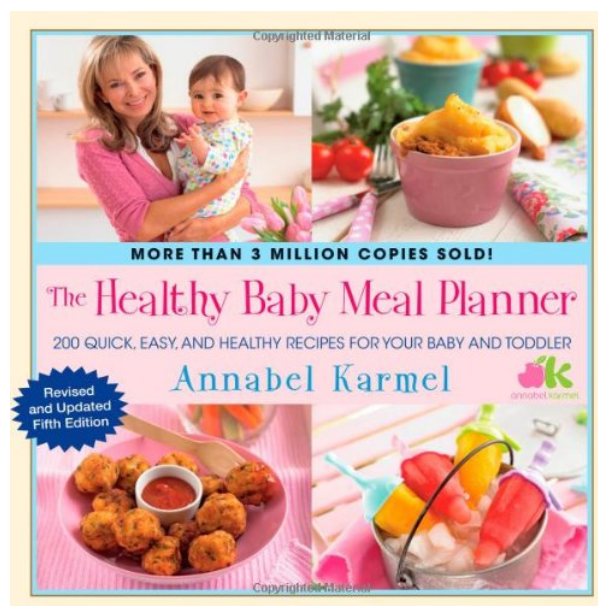
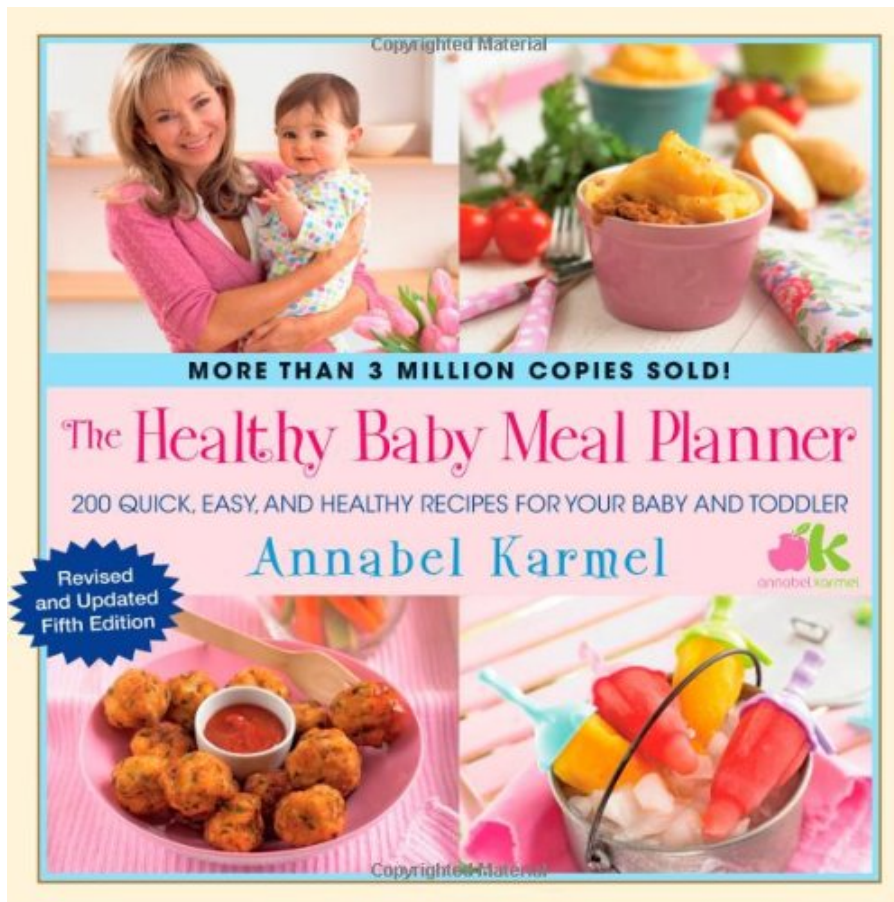


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## About the Author

Annabel Karmel is the mother of three children and the UK's leading expert on feeding children. She works with leading US parenting websites such as Parents.com and has appeared on many TV shows, including the Today show and The View. Check out her popular app, Annabel's Essential Guide to Feeding Your Baby & Toddler, and visit her website, AnnabelKarmel.com, to learn more.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BEST FIRST FOODS FOR YOUR BABY

Many mothers feel that, once their baby is three months old, they should be starting to feed him solids. In fact there is no 'right' age as every baby is different.

Physiologically, there is no rush to get your baby started on solids. A baby's digestive system is not fully matured for the first few months and foreign proteins very early on may increase the likelihood of allergic food problems later. However, be warned, socially there is a kind of competitive spirit amongst mothers to get their child on to puréed steak and fries as soon as possible! I would advise that, provided your child is satisfied and growing properly, you should wait until he is between four and six months old before starting to give him simple solid foods.

### Milk is Still the Major Food

It is very important to remember when starting your baby on solids that milk is still the most natural and the best food for growing babies. I would encourage mothers to try breast-feeding. Apart from the emotional benefits, breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from infection. In the first few months, they

are particularly vulnerable and the colostrum a mother produces in the first few days of breast-feeding is a very important source of antibodies which help to build up a baby's immune system. (There are enormous benefits in breast-feeding your child even for as little as one week.) It is also medically proven that breast-fed babies are less likely to develop certain diseases in later life.

Milk should contain all the nutrients that your baby needs to grow. There are 65 calories in 4 fl oz (1/2 cup) of milk and formula milk is fortified with vitamins and, for babies over 4 months, also with iron. Cow's milk is not such a 'complete' food for human babies so is best not started until your baby is one year old. Solids are introduced to add bulk to a baby's diet, and to introduce new tastes, textures and aromas; they also help the baby to practise using the muscles in his mouth. But giving a baby too much solid food too early may lead to constipation, and fewer nutrients than he needs. It would be very difficult for a baby to get the equivalent amount of nutrients from the small amount of solids as he gets from his milk.

Do not use softened water when making up your baby's bottle or repeatedly boiled water because of the danger of concentrating mineral salts. Babies' bottles should not be warmed in a microwave, as the milk may be too hot even though the bottle feels cool to the touch. Warm bottles standing in hot water.

There is no fixed rule as to how much milk a baby should consume during the day. However, it is important to make sure (especially as it is highly likely that a bottle may not be finished at each feed) that up to the age of five months, your baby drinks milk at least four times a day. If the number of feeds is reduced too quickly, your baby will not be able to drink as much as is needed. Some mothers make the mistake of giving their baby solid food when he or she is hungry, when what he really needs is an additional milk feed.

Although most babies of six months are perfectly able to drink pasteurised cow's milk and many mothers, especially in other countries, start their babies on cow's milk this early, it is best to continue with breast or formula milk for one year.

Dairy products like yogurt and cheese can be introduced after six months and are usually very popular with babies. Choose whole milk products rather than low-fat.

### Fresh is Best

Fresh foods just do taste, smell and look better than jars of pre-prepared baby foods. Neither is there any doubt that, prepared correctly, they are better for your baby (and you), for it is inevitable nutrients, especially vitamins, are lost in the processing of pre-prepared baby foods. Home-made food tastes quite different from the jars you can buy. (If you were ever to try a blind tasting of popular brands of baby foods, you would know that it is very difficult to recognise what particular food each jar contains!)

There is also a very limited variety of single fruit and vegetables. Most of the jars available contain bland combinations of foods puréed to the same consistency so that it is difficult for your child to differentiate one food from another. It can be quite a problem getting your baby to accept the coarser texture of home-made purees once he is used to the very smooth texture of commercially prepared baby foods. It's best therefore to start cooking for your baby yourself right from the beginning. I believe your child is less likely to become a fussy eater if he is used to a wide selection of tastes and textures from a very early age. You can 'train' your child to enjoy the flavors of fresh spinach or apple and pea purée rather than crave candy and doughnuts. Why give them sugary and fatty foods when healthy food can be just as enjoyable?

### Your Baby's Nutritional Requirements

The following six are essential nutrients that a child needs for a healthy diet and to promote growth.

## PROTEINS

Proteins are needed for the growth and repair of our bodies, any extra can be used to provide energy (or is deposited as fat).

Proteins are made up of different amino acids. Some foods; meat, fish, dairy produce including cheeses, and soybeans, contain all the amino acids that are essential to our bodies. Other foods; grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, are still valuable sources of protein but do not contain all the essential amino acids.

## CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates and fat provide our bodies with their main source of energy. The former also provide fiber which adds bulk to our diet and acts as a natural laxative.

There are two types of carbohydrate: sugar is one and starch (which in complex form provides fiber) is the other. In both types there are two forms - the natural and the refined. In both cases, it is the natural form which provides a more healthy alternative.

## SUGARS

Natural

Fruit and Fruit juices

Vegetables

Vegetable juices

Refined

Sugars and honey

Sweetened cordials and sodas

Sweet gelatins

Jellies and other preserves

Cakes and cookies

## STARCHES

Natural

Whole-grain breakfast cereals, flour, bread and pasta

Brown rice

Potatoes Legumes, peas and lentils

Bananas and many other fruits and vegetables

Refined

Processed breakfast cereals (i.e. sugarcoated flakes)

White flour, breads and pasta

White rice

Sugary cookies

Cakes

FATS

Fats provide a concentrated source of energy. The body also needs to store some fat to prevent excessive loss of body heat. Thus a certain amount of fat is essential in everyone's diet. Foods that contain fats also contain the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. The problem is that many people eat too much fat and the wrong type of fat.

There are two types of fat - saturated, which mainly comes from animal sources, and unsaturated which comes from vegetable sources. It is the saturated fats which are the most harmful and which may lead to high cholesterol levels and coronary disease later in life.

It is important to give your baby whole milk for at least the first two years but try to reduce fats in cooking and use butter and margarine in moderation. Try to reduce saturated fats in your child's diet by cutting down on red meat, especially fatty meats like lamb; replace with more chicken and fish. This may in fact be a good time to review the whole family's eating habits, and to cut out all that butter on Daddy's toast in the morning!

FATS

Saturated

Butter

Meat

Lard, suet and drippings

Eggs

Cheese and full-fat yogurt

Cakes and cookies

Hard margarine

Whole milk

Unsaturated fats

Sunflower, grapeseed, safflower, sesame, soy, canola and olive oils Soft polyunsaturated margarine Oily fish (e.g. mackerel)

## VITAMINS

The possibility of vitamin deficiencies in the developed world should not be ignored. The children most at risk are those who follow a Vegan diet (i.e. no animal products at all) and those drinking cow's milk from the age of six months. Pediatricians recommend that these children should take a daily vitamin supplement until they are at least two.

For most children eating fresh food in sufficient quantity and drinking breast or formula milk until one year of age, vitamin supplements are unnecessary.

There are two types of vitamins - water-soluble (C and B complex) and fat-soluble (A, D, E and K). Water-soluble vitamins cannot be stored by the body so foods containing these should be eaten daily. They can also easily be destroyed by overcooking, especially when fruit and vegetables are boiled in water. You should try to preserve these vitamins by eating the foods raw or just lightly cooked (in a steamer, for instance).

There is some controversy over whether vitamin supplements can improve your child's IQ. As vitamins are necessary for the correct development of the brain and nervous system, it is important that a good supply of all vitamins is taken. However, a good balanced diet should supply all that is required and an excess of vitamins is potentially harmful. Good sources of all the major vitamins and minerals are given in the tables to the left.

## VITAMIN A

Essential for growth, healthy skin, tooth enamel and good vision.

Liver

Oily fish

Carrots

Dark green vegetables (e.g. broccoli) Sweet potatoes

Oranges

Squash

Tomatoes

Lentils

Watercress

Apricots and peaches

Whole milk and eggs

Butter and margarine

#### VITAMIN B COMPLEX

Essential for growth, changing food into energy, for a healthy nervous system and as an aid to digestion. There are a large number of vitamins in the B group. Some are found in many foods, but no foods except for liver and yeast extract contain them all.

Meat, especially meat juices (so use in gravy) and liver

Fish

Dairy produce and eggs

Whole-grain cereals

Wheatgerm

Dark green vegetables

Potatoes

Yeast extract (e.g. Vegemite)

Nuts

Legumes

Bananas

#### VITAMIN C

Is needed for growth, healthy tissue and healing of wounds. It helps in the absorption of iron.

Vegetables such as: broccoli; Brussels sprouts; greens; bell peppers; potatoes; spinach; cauliflower.

Fruits such as: oranges and other citrus fruits; blueberries; melon; papaya; strawberries and tomatoes

#### VITAMIN D

Essential for proper bone formation, it works in conjunction with calcium. It is found in few foods, but is made by the skin in the presence of sunlight.

Oily fish

Liver

Oils

Eggs

Margarine

Dairy produce

VITAMIN E

Important for the composition of the cell structure, and helps the body to create and maintain red blood cells.

Vegetable oils

Margarine

Wheatgerm

Nuts

VITAMIN K

Aids in blood clotting, maintains bones, and is present in the intestine.

It is found in most vegetables and whole-grain cereals.

CALCIUM

Calcium is needed for strong bones good teeth and growth.

Dairy produce, especially milk Canned fish with bones (e.g. sardines, but only for older children)

Dried fruit

Bread and flour

Broccoli

Legumes

IRON

Iron is needed for healthy blood and muscles. A deficiency in iron is probably the most common and will leave your child feeling tired and run down.

Liver and red meat

Oily fish

Egg yolks

Dried fruits (especially apricots)

Whole-grain cereals

Lentils and legumes

Green leafy vegetables

Chocolate

## WATER

Humans can survive for quite a time without food, but only a few days without water. Babies lose more water through their kidneys and skin than adults and also through vomiting and diarrhea.

Thus it is very important that your baby should not be allowed to dehydrate. Make sure he drinks plenty of fluids. Cool, boiled water is the best drink to give your baby on hot days particularly, as it will cool the body down quicker than any sugary drink.

It is really not necessary to give a very young baby anything to drink other than milk or plain water if he is just thirsty. Fruit sirups, cordials and other sweetened drinks should be discouraged to prevent dental decay. Don't be fooled if the packet says 'dextrose' - this is just a type of sugar.

If your baby refuses to drink water then give him unsweetened baby juice or fresh 100 percent fruit juices. Dilute according to instructions or for fresh juice use one part juice to three parts water, gradually increasing to half and half.

## The Question of Allergies

It is fairly common for babies to inherit food allergies from their parents, and where there is a history of a particular food allergy, that food should only be introduced singly and with great care.

The commonest foods which carry a risk of allergic reaction in babies are cow's milk and dairy products, eggs, fish (especially shellfish), some fruits, nuts and foods containing gluten. Some babies (and older children) can also react to artificial food colorings and additives. The commonest allergic problems which may be triggered by adverse reactions to food are: nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; asthma; eczema; hayfever; rashes and swelling of the eyes, lips and face. This is one reason it is unwise to rush starting your baby on solid foods.

There is no need to be unduly worried about food allergy, unless there is a family history. The incidence of food allergy in normal babies is extremely small and, with the tendency to a later introduction of solid food between four and six months, they have become even less common. However, it is still children under the age of eighteen months who are most likely to develop an allergy to a particular food. Although a lot of children 'grow out of it' by the age of two, some food allergies - particularly a sensitivity to eggs, milk, shellfish or nuts - can last for life. If your child has an allergy, do tell friend's mums and the school when he

is old enough.

Never be afraid to take your baby to the doctor if you are worried that there is something wrong. Young babies' immune systems are not fully matured and babies can become ill very quickly if they are not treated properly and can develop serious complications.

## LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

Lactose intolerance is not actually an allergy. Children who suffer lactose intolerance lack the substance lactase, an enzyme present in the superficial layers of the small bowel, which breaks lactose down to simpler sugars. Lactose is present in all milks and these babies will not be able to drink breast or cow's milk. A soy formula is given.

Some children who are lactose intolerant are able to eat dairy products like cheese and yogurt with no ill effects.

## COW'S MILK PROTEIN ALLERGY

If your baby is sensitive to cow's milk, consult your doctor who will probably recommend a soy-based milk formula. Unmodified soy milk is not suitable as it is nutritionally inadequate. However, some babies who are allergic to cow's milk are also allergic to soy-based milks and for those babies there are a number of hypo-allergic milk formulas available on prescription. Breast milk is the best milk for babies who are allergic to cow's milk but mothers may need to limit dairy foods themselves as these can be transferred to their baby through breast milk.

No dairy products are tolerated in this condition and in the weaning diet milk-free vegetable or soy margarine may be substituted for butter and carob for milk chocolate. Very often babies outgrow this allergy by the age of two.

## EGGS

Avoid giving egg whites before one year. Cooked egg yolks may be given once the baby is well established in mixed feeding, between eight and nine months.

## FISH

Most pediatricians advise mothers not to give fish to their babies before eight months and to avoid all shellfish.

## FRUITS

Some children can have an adverse reaction to citrus and berry fruits. Avoid these before 1 year but be sure to choose a Vitamin-C-rich drink.

## NUTS

par

Nuts, even ground, should be avoided for at least the first seven months. Children under three can choke on whole nuts.

## GLUTEN

If there is a family history of gluten intolerance babies under six months must follow a gluten-free diet but it is preferable for all young babies. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley and oats and gluten sensitivity can cause celiac disease which, although rare can be serious.

When buying baby cereals and rusks, choose varieties that are gluten-free. Baby rice is the safest to try at first and thereafter there are plenty of alternate gluten-free products such as soy, cornstarch, rice, millet and potato flour for thickening and baking, brown rice, rice noodles, buckwheat spaghetti etc.

### Preparing Baby Foods

Preparing and cooking baby foods is not difficult, but because you are dealing with a young baby, considerations like hygiene must be of the utmost importance.

## EQUIPMENT

Most of the equipment needed will already be in your kitchen -- mashers, graters, strainers etc -- but the following three pieces I consider are vital!

**Food mill** A hand-turned food mill or ricer with variable cutting discs purees the food, separating it from the seeds and skin which can be difficult for the baby to digest. It is best used for fruit, vegetables, fish and the softer textured meats such as chicken and liver.

**Blender or food processor** This is useful for pureeing larger quantities. However, foods for young babies will often need to be pushed through a strainer afterwards to remove any seeds and skin.

**Steamer** The best way to preserve the fresh taste and vitamins in fruits and vegetables is to cook them in a steamer. It is worth buying a good multi-tiered steamer which will enable you to cook several different foods at the same time. (A colander over a saucepan along with a well-fitting lid, is a cheaper alternate.)

## STERILIZING

At first, it is very important to sterilize bottles, and particularly, the teats that your baby sucks, properly by whatever approved method you choose. Warm milk is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria and if bottles are not properly washed and sterilized, your baby can become very ill. It is also best to sterilize the dishes and spoons you use for feeding your baby. It would be impossible, however, to sterilize all the equipment you use for cooking and pureeing baby food, but take extra care to keep everything very clean.

Use a dishwasher if you have one; the water is at a much higher temperature than it would be possible to use if washing the utensils by hand and helps to sterilize your equipment. However, once it is removed from the dishwasher, it does not remain sterile; bottles should be filled with milk immediately and stored in the fridge. Dry utensils with paper towels rather than a non-sterile dish towel.

Milk bottles should continue to be sterilized until your baby is one year old, but there is really not much point sterilizing spoons or food containers beyond the age when your baby crawls and puts everything in reach into his mouth.

## COOKING BABY FOODS

Fruit and vegetables can lose nutrients when they are cooked so it makes sense to eat some both cooked and raw. However, raw ones would be difficult to digest for a young baby so, until the age of six months, most fruit and vegetables (apart from ripe bananas) should be cooked. As the baby gains teeth and learns to chew, the fruit or vegetables can be cooked more lightly in order to retain Vitamin C and crispness. After about six months, your baby can have purées of raw fruit and fresh grated fruit; raw or very al dente vegetables can be given as a finger food.

Cook in many ways -- boiling, steaming, stewing or baking. Try to avoid fat-based methods of cooking such as frying (or cut down on the amount of fat used). Steaming, as mentioned above, is by far the best and, to maximize on nutritional benefits, the water in which or over which vegetables have cooked (so long as it does not contain salt) could be used as a drink or as the cooking water for something else such as pasta. Try also to maximize on fuel economy; steam a number of different foods at one time before puréeing and storing separately.

Cook fruit and vegetable purées for your baby by whichever method you choose. In each case make sure the purée is completely smooth, with no lumps. Later on you can adjust the texture of the puree to suit your baby as he starts to chew. Freeze any purée you are not using straightaway.

**Boiling or steaming** Wash fruit or vegetable carefully, peel, seed or pit as necessary and cut into small pieces. Add just enough water to cover and simmer until tender or steam (about 10 minutes, see individual recipes). Drain or remove from steamer, retaining the cooking water, then blend, mill or mash, adding some of the cooking water to bring it to the correct consistency for your baby.

**Microwaving** Peel, seed or pit the fruit or vegetable as necessary, and cut into slices. Put in a microwave dish with enough water just to cover and cover the dish with a lid. Microwave on High for about 3 minutes. Uncover, stir, re-cover and cook for another 2 minutes or until tender. Cooking times will vary according to how hard the fruit is to begin with. Blend, mash or mill to the right consistency, adding water as necessary.

## FREEZING BABY FOODS

Whenever possible, prepare more food than is immediately needed and freeze the remainder in ice-cube trays for future meals. There are a limited number of foods that do not freeze well (like bananas and avocados) but most foods can be frozen with excellent results. Thus, in one or two hours a week, you can prepare enough to feed your baby for a month -- making for a happier mother and baby and more time to spend together.

You will need a freezer which can freeze food to 0°F or below in 24 hours and sterile packaging. At the earliest stages, when only teaspoons of food are being taken, this means plastic ice-cube trays (sterilize these as well) and plastic freezer bags.

Cook and purée the food as described in the recipes, cover, leave to cool, then freeze until hard in ice-cube trays. Knock out and store in clearly labeled freezer bags. Label the food with the expiry date so you never give your baby food that is past its best.

## FREEZER STORAGE TIMES

Fruits 6 months

Vegetables 6 months

Purées with milk 4-6 weeks

Fish 10 weeks

Meat and chicken

Apple, pear, banana, papaya 4-5 months

Carrot, potato, zucchini, squash, green beans, rutabaga, sweet potato 4-5 months

Dried fruit, peach, kiwi, apricot, plum, melon, avocado 5-6 months

Peas, celery, bell pepper 5-6 months

Chicken, dairy products, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, greens, leek 6 months

Split pea, lima beans, lentils 8-9 months

Egg yolks 8-9 months

Fish 8-9 months

Citrus fruit, berries, tomato, mushrooms, honey, whole egg 1 year

Shellfish over 2 year

To thaw one meal, remove the relevant number of cubes of food from the bag (only one at the very beginning) and leave at room temperature for an hour. Heat thoroughly, cool, then serve immediately. If using a microwave, stir well to make sure there is an even distribution of heat, allow to cool. Always test the temperature of food before giving it to your baby. Fruits to be served cold can thaw in the refrigerator overnight.

Never re-freeze foods which have already been frozen, and never reheat them more than once.

When can they have...?

I have listed below when you should introduce particular foods to your baby. This is not an exhaustive list and you should refer to each chapter for more information.

Meal Planners

In the next chapter I have devised some meal planners which will help you through the first weeks when you start to wean your baby. There are endless variations on the foods that can be given and the order in which they can be introduced.

If your baby's last meal is close to bed time, avoid giving him anything heavy or difficult to digest. This is certainly not the time to experiment with new foods if you both want a good night's sleep.

I have tried to give a wide choice of recipes, although I would expect that in practise meals that your baby

enjoys would be repeated several times over the period of a week -- and this is where your freezer will come in handy.

In each subsequent chapter, there are meal planners for your baby which you may follow or simply use as a guide. Adapt the charts according to what is in season and what you are preparing for your family. From nine months onwards, you should be able to cook for your baby and family together, perhaps eating the recipes you give your baby for lunch and supper for your own supper.

In these later charts, I have set out four meals a day. However, many babies are quite satisfied with three meals and some healthy snacks.

Many of the vegetable purées in the early chapters can be transformed into a vegetable soup; and a number of the vegetable dishes can serve as good side dishes for the family. If you give the baby some of the vegetables you are preparing for the family, make sure they have not been salted. In the later chapters many recipes are suitable for the whole family.

After each recipe you will find a symbol of two faces, one smiling, the other gloomy, each with a check box. You will find these useful in recording the success (or otherwise) of your baby meal recipes!

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Fully revised and updated with new and enhanced recipes and an improved layout, The Healthy Baby Meal Planner is a fun, easy-to-follow, and comprehensive guide to creating homemade meals for infants and young children.

The Healthy Baby Meal Planner shows parents how to start their babies off to a lifetime of healthy and happy eating. Focusing on what foods are appropriate for each stage of a child's development from infancy to age two, Karmel discusses the best first foods, how and when to introduce fruits, vegetables, and other solid foods, and how to create tempting dishes even for the fussiest of eaters.

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## Features

- Latest information on food allergies and infant nutrition
- Time-saving preparation tips and recipe ideas for special occasions
- Advice on introducing new tastes and textures to infants and toddlers
- How to make appealing meals for even the pickiest eaters

## About the Author

Annabel Karmel is the mother of three children and the UK's leading expert on feeding children. She works with leading US parenting websites such as Parents.com and has appeared on many TV shows, including the Today show and The View. Check out her popular app, Annabel's Essential Guide to Feeding Your Baby & Toddler, and visit her website, [AnnabelKarmel.com](http://AnnabelKarmel.com), to learn more.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BEST FIRST FOODS FOR YOUR BABY

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### Milk is Still the Major Food

It is very important to remember when starting your baby on solids that milk is still the most natural and the best food for growing babies. I would encourage mothers to try breast-feeding. Apart from the emotional benefits, breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from infection. In the first few months, they are particularly vulnerable and the colostrum a mother produces in the first few days of breast-feeding is a very important source of antibodies which help to build up a baby's immune system. (There are enormous benefits in breast-feeding your child even for as little as one week.) It is also medically proven that breast-fed babies are less likely to develop certain diseases in later life.

Milk should contain all the nutrients that your baby needs to grow. There are 65 calories in 4 fl oz (1/2 cup) of milk and formula milk is fortified with vitamins and, for babies over 4 months, also with iron. Cow's milk is not such a 'complete' food for human babies so is best not started until your baby is one year old. Solids are introduced to add bulk to a baby's diet, and to introduce new tastes, textures and aromas; they also help the baby to practise using the muscles in his mouth. But giving a baby too much solid food too early may lead to constipation, and fewer nutrients than he needs. It would be very difficult for a baby to get the equivalent amount of nutrients from the small amount of solids as he gets from his milk.

Do not use softened water when making up your baby's bottle or repeatedly boiled water because of the danger of concentrating mineral salts. Babies' bottles should not be warmed in a microwave, as the milk may be too hot even though the bottle feels cool to the touch. Warm bottles standing in hot water.

There is no fixed rule as to how much milk a baby should consume during the day. However, it is important to make sure (especially as it is highly likely that a bottle may not be finished at each feed) that up to the age of five months, your baby drinks milk at least four times a day. If the number of feeds is reduced too quickly, your baby will not be able to drink as much as is needed. Some mothers make the mistake of giving their baby solid food when he or she is hungry, when what he really needs is an additional milk feed.

Although most babies of six months are perfectly able to drink pasteurised cow's milk and many mothers, especially in other countries, start their babies on cow's milk this early, it is best to continue with breast or formula milk for one year.

Dairy products like yogurt and cheese can be introduced after six months and are usually very popular with babies. Choose whole milk products rather than low-fat.

### Fresh is Best

Fresh foods just do taste, smell and look better than jars of pre-prepared baby foods. Neither is there any doubt that, prepared correctly, they are better for your baby (and you), for it is inevitable nutrients, especially vitamins, are lost in the processing of pre-prepared baby foods. Home-made food tastes quite different from the jars you can buy. (If you were ever to try a blind tasting of popular brands of baby foods, you would know that it is very difficult to recognise what particular food each jar contains!)

There is also a very limited variety of single fruit and vegetables. Most of the jars available contain bland combinations of foods puréed to the same consistency so that it is difficult for your child to differentiate one food from another. It can be quite a problem getting your baby to accept the coarser texture of home-made purees once he is used to the very smooth texture of commercially prepared baby foods. It is best therefore to start cooking for your baby yourself right from the beginning. I believe your child is less likely to become a fussy eater if he is used to a wide selection of tastes and textures from a very early age. You can 'train' your child to enjoy the flavors of fresh spinach or apple and pea purée rather than crave candy and doughnuts. Why give them sugary and fatty foods when healthy food can be just as enjoyable?

### Your Baby's Nutritional Requirements

The following six are essential nutrients that a child needs for a healthy diet and to promote growth.

#### PROTEINS

Proteins are needed for the growth and repair of our bodies, any extra can be used to provide energy (or is deposited as fat).

Proteins are made up of different amino acids. Some foods; meat, fish, dairy produce including cheeses, and soybeans, contain all the amino acids that are essential to our bodies. Other foods; grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, are still valuable sources of protein but do not contain all the essential amino acids.

#### CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates and fat provide our bodies with their main source of energy. The former also provide fiber which adds bulk to our diet and acts as a natural laxative.

There are two types of carbohydrate: sugar is one and starch (which in complex form provides fiber) is the other. In both types there are two forms - the natural and the refined. In both cases, it is the natural form which provides a more healthy alternative.

#### SUGARS

Natural

Fruit and Fruit juices

Vegetables

Vegetable juices

Refined

Sugars and honey

Sweetened cordials and sodas

Sweet gelatins

Jellies and other preserves

Cakes and cookies

## STARCHES

Natural

Whole-grain breakfast cereals, flour, bread and pasta

Brown rice

Potatoes Legumes, peas and lentils

Bananas and many other fruits and vegetables

Refined

Processed breakfast cereals (i.e. sugarcoated flakes)

White flour, breads and pasta

White rice

Sugary cookies

Cakes

## FATS

Fats provide a concentrated source of energy. The body also needs to store some fat to prevent excessive loss of body heat. Thus a certain amount of fat is essential in everyone's diet. Foods that contain fats also contain the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. The problem is that many people eat too much fat and the wrong type of fat.

There are two types of fat - saturated, which mainly comes from animal sources, and unsaturated which comes from vegetable sources. It is the saturated fats which are the most harmful and which may lead to high cholesterol levels and coronary disease later in life.

It is important to give your baby whole milk for at least the first two years but try to reduce fats in cooking and use butter and margarine in moderation. Try to reduce saturated fats in your child's diet by cutting down on red meat, especially fatty meats like lamb; replace with more chicken and fish. This may in fact be a good time to review the whole family's eating habits, and to cut out all that butter on Daddy's toast in the morning!

## FATS

Saturated

Butter

Meat

Lard, suet and drippings

Eggs

Cheese and full-fat yogurt

Cakes and cookies

Hard margarine

Whole milk

Unsaturated fats

Sunflower, grapeseed, safflower, sesame, soy, canola and olive oils Soft polyunsaturated margarine Oily fish (e.g. mackerel)

## VITAMINS

The possibility of vitamin deficiencies in the developed world should not be ignored. The children most at risk are those who follow a Vegan diet (i.e. no animal products at all) and those drinking cow's milk from the age of six months. Pediatricians recommend that these children should take a daily vitamin supplement until they are at least two.

For most children eating fresh food in sufficient quantity and drinking breast or formula milk until one year of age, vitamin supplements are unnecessary.

There are two types of vitamins - water-soluble (C and B complex) and fat-soluble (A, D, E and K). Water-soluble vitamins cannot be stored by the body so foods containing these should be eaten daily. They can also easily be destroyed by overcooking, especially when fruit and vegetables are boiled in water. You should try to preserve these vitamins by eating the foods raw or just lightly cooked (in a steamer, for instance).

There is some controversy over whether vitamin supplements can improve your child's IQ. As vitamins are necessary for the correct development of the brain and nervous system, it is important that a good supply of all vitamins is taken. However, a good balanced diet should supply all that is required and an excess of vitamins is potentially harmful. Good sources of all the major vitamins and minerals are given in the tables to the left.

## VITAMIN A

Essential for growth, healthy skin, tooth enamel and good vision.

Liver

Oily fish

Carrots

Dark green vegetables (e.g. broccoli) Sweet potatoes

Oranges

Squash

Tomatoes

Lentils

Watercress

Apricots and peaches

Whole milk and eggs

Butter and margarine

#### VITAMIN B COMPLEX

Essential for growth, changing food into energy, for a healthy nervous system and as an aid to digestion. There are a large number of vitamins in the B group. Some are found in many foods, but no foods except for liver and yeast extract contain them all.

Meat, especially meat juices (so use in gravy) and liver

Fish

Dairy produce and eggs

Whole-grain cereals

Wheatgerm

Dark green vegetables

Potatoes

Yeast extract (e.g. Vegemite)

Nuts

Legumes

Bananas

#### VITAMIN C

Is needed for growth, healthy tissue and healing of wounds. It helps in the absorption of iron.

Vegetables such as: broccoli; Brussels sprouts; greens; bell peppers; potatoes; spinach; cauliflower.

Fruits such as: oranges and other citrus fruits; blueberries; melon; papaya; strawberries and tomatoes

## VITAMIN D

Essential for proper bone formation, it works in conjunction with calcium. It is found in few foods, but is made by the skin in the presence of sunlight.

Oily fish

Liver

Oils

Eggs

Margarine

Dairy produce

## VITAMIN E

Important for the composition of the cell structure, and helps the body to create and maintain red blood cells.

Vegetable oils

Margarine

Wheatgerm

Nuts

## VITAMIN K

Aids in blood clotting, maintains bones, and is present in the intestine.

It is found in most vegetables and whole-grain cereals.

## CALCIUM

Calcium is needed for strong bones good teeth and growth.

Dairy produce, especially milk Canned fish with bones (e.g. sardines, but only for older children)

Dried fruit

Bread and flour

Broccoli

Legumes

## IRON

Iron is needed for healthy blood and muscles. A deficiency in iron is probably the most common and will leave your child feeling tired and run down.

Liver and red meat

Oily fish

Egg yolks

Dried fruits (especially apricots)

Whole-grain cereals

Lentils and legumes

Green leafy vegetables

Chocolate

## WATER

Humans can survive for quite a time without food, but only a few days without water. Babies lose more water through their kidneys and skin than adults and also through vomiting and diarrhea.

Thus it is very important that your baby should not be allowed to dehydrate. Make sure he drinks plenty of fluids. Cool, boiled water is the best drink to give your baby on hot days particularly, as it will cool the body down quicker than any sugary drink.

It is really not necessary to give a very young baby anything to drink other than milk or plain water if he is just thirsty. Fruit sirups, cordials and other sweetened drinks should be discouraged to prevent dental decay. Don't be fooled if the packet says 'dextrose' - this is just a type of sugar.

If your baby refuses to drink water then give him unsweetened baby juice or fresh 100 percent fruit juices. Dilute according to instructions or for fresh juice use one part juice to three parts water, gradually increasing to half and half.

## The Question of Allergies

It is fairly common for babies to inherit food allergies from their parents, and where there is a history of a particular food allergy, that food should only be introduced singly and with great care.

The commonest foods which carry a risk of allergic reaction in babies are cow's milk and dairy products, eggs, fish (especially shellfish), some fruits, nuts and foods containing gluten. Some babies (and older

children) can also react to artificial food colorings and additives. The commonest allergic problems which may be triggered by adverse reactions to food are: nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; asthma; eczema; hayfever; rashes and swelling of the eyes, lips and face. This is one reason it is unwise to rush starting your baby on solid foods.

There is no need to be unduly worried about food allergy, unless there is a family history. The incidence of food allergy in normal babies is extremely small and, with the tendency to a later introduction of solid food between four and six months, they have become even less common. However, it is still children under the age of eighteen months who are most likely to develop an allergy to a particular food. Although a lot of children 'grow out of it' by the age of two, some food allergies - particularly a sensitivity to eggs, milk, shellfish or nuts - can last for life. If your child has an allergy, do tell friend's mums and the school when he is old enough.

Never be afraid to take your baby to the doctor if you are worried that there is something wrong. Young babies' immune systems are not fully matured and babies can become ill very quickly if they are not treated properly and can develop serious complications.

### LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

Lactose intolerance is not actually an allergy. Children who suffer lactose intolerance lack the substance lactase, an enzyme present in the superficial layers of the small bowel, which breaks lactose down to simpler sugars. Lactose is present in all milks and these babies will not be able to drink breast or cow's milk. A soy formula is given.

Some children who are lactose intolerant are able to eat dairy products like cheese and yogurt with no ill effects.

### COW'S MILK PROTEIN ALLERGY

If your baby is sensitive to cow's milk, consult your doctor who will probably recommend a soy-based milk formula. Unmodified soy milk is not suitable as it is nutritionally inadequate. However, some babies who are allergic to cow's milk are also allergic to soy-based milks and for those babies there are a number of hypo-allergic milk formulas available on prescription. Breast milk is the best milk for babies who are allergic to cow's milk but mothers may need to limit dairy foods themselves as these can be transferred to their baby through breast milk.

No dairy products are tolerated in this condition and in the weaning diet milk-free vegetable or soy margarine may be substituted for butter and carob for milk chocolate. Very often babies outgrow this allergy by the age of two.

### EGGS

Avoid giving egg whites before one year. Cooked egg yolks may be given once the baby is well established in mixed feeding, between eight and nine months.

### FISH

Most pediatricians advise mothers not to give fish to their babies before eight months and to avoid all shellfish.

## FRUITS

Some children can have an adverse reaction to citrus and berry fruits. Avoid these before 1 year but be sure to choose a Vitamin-C-rich drink.

## NUTS

par

Nuts, even ground, should be avoided for at least the first seven months. Children under three can choke on whole nuts.

## GLUTEN

If there is a family history of gluten intolerance babies under six months must follow a gluten-free diet but it is preferable for all young babies. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley and oats and gluten sensitivity can cause celiac disease which, although rare can be serious.

When buying baby cereals and rusks, choose varieties that are gluten-free. Baby rice is the safest to try at first and thereafter there are plenty of alternate gluten-free products such as soy, cornstarch, rice, millet and potato flour for thickening and baking, brown rice, rice noodles, buckwheat spaghetti etc.

## Preparing Baby Foods

Preparing and cooking baby foods is not difficult, but because you are dealing with a young baby, considerations like hygiene must be of the utmost importance.

## EQUIPMENT

Most of the equipment needed will already be in your kitchen -- mashers, graters, strainers etc -- but the following three pieces I consider are vital!

**Food mill** A hand-turned food mill or ricer with variable cutting discs pureés the food, separating it from the seeds and skin which can be difficult for the baby to digest. It is best used for fruit, vegetables, fish and the softer textured meats such as chicken and liver.

**Blender or food processor** This is useful for puréeing larger quantities. However, foods for young babies will often need to be pushed through a strainer afterwards to remove any seeds and skin.

**Steamer** The best way to preserve the fresh taste and vitamins in fruits and vegetables is to cook them in a steamer. It is worth buying a good multi-tiered steamer which will enable you to cook several different foods at the same time. (A colander over a saucepan along with a well-fitting lid, is a cheaper alternate.)

## STERILIZING

At first, it is very important to sterilize bottles, and particularly, the teats that your baby sucks, properly by whatever approved method you choose. Warm milk is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria and if bottles are not properly washed and sterilized, your baby can become very ill. It is also best to sterilize the dishes and spoons you use for feeding your baby. It would be impossible, however, to sterilize all the equipment you use for cooking and puréeing baby food, but take extra care to keep everything very clean.

Use a dishwasher if you have one; the water is at a much higher temperature than it would be possible to use if washing the utensils by hand and helps to sterilize your equipment. However, once it is removed from the dishwasher, it does not remain sterile; bottles should be filled with milk immediately and stored in the fridge. Dry utensils with paper towels rather than a non-sterile dish towel.

Milk bottles should continue to be sterilized until your baby is one year old, but there is really not much point sterilizing spoons or food containers beyond the age when your baby crawls and puts everything in reach into his mouth.

## COOKING BABY FOODS

Fruit and vegetables can lose nutrients when they are cooked so it makes sense to eat some both cooked and raw. However, raw ones would be difficult to digest for a young baby so, until the age of six months, most fruit and vegetables (apart from ripe bananas) should be cooked. As the baby gains teeth and learns to chew, the fruit or vegetables can be cooked more lightly in order to retain Vitamin C and crispness. After about six months, your baby can have purées of raw fruit and fresh grated fruit; raw or very al dente vegetables can be given as a finger food.

Cook in many ways -- boiling, steaming, stewing or baking. Try to avoid fat-based methods of cooking such as frying (or cut down on the amount of fat used). Steaming, as mentioned above, is by far the best and, to maximize on nutritional benefits, the water in which or over which vegetables have cooked (so long as it does not contain salt) could be used as a drink or as the cooking water for something else such as pasta. Try also to maximize on fuel economy; steam a number of different foods at one time before puréeing and storing separately.

Cook fruit and vegetable purées for your baby by whichever method you choose. In each case make sure the purée is completely smooth, with no lumps. Later on you can adjust the texture of the puree to suit your baby as he starts to chew. Freeze any purée you are not using straightaway.

**Boiling or steaming** Wash fruit or vegetable carefully, peel, seed or pit as necessary and cut into small pieces. Add just enough water to cover and simmer until tender or steam (about 10 minutes, see individual recipes). Drain or remove from steamer, retaining the cooking water, then blend, mill or mash, adding some of the cooking water to bring it to the correct consistency for your baby.

**Microwaving** Peel, seed or pit the fruit or vegetable as necessary, and cut into slices. Put in a microwave dish with enough water just to cover and cover the dish with a lid. Microwave on High for about 3 minutes. Uncover, stir, re-cover and cook for another 2 minutes or until tender. Cooking times will vary according to how hard the fruit is to begin with. Blend, mash or mill to the right consistency, adding water as necessary.

## FREEZING BABY FOODS

Whenever possible, prepare more food than is immediately needed and freeze the remainder in ice-cube trays for future meals. There are a limited number of foods that do not freeze well (like bananas and avocados) but most foods can be frozen with excellent results. Thus, in one or two hours a week, you can prepare enough to feed your baby for a month -- making for a happier mother and baby and more time to spend together.

You will need a freezer which can freeze food to 0°F or below in 24 hours and sterile packaging. At the earliest stages, when only teaspoons of food are being taken, this means plastic ice-cube trays (sterilize these as well) and plastic freezer bags.

Cook and purée the food as described in the recipes, cover, leave to cool, then freeze until hard in ice-cube trays. Knock out and store in clearly labeled freezer bags. Label the food with the expiry date so you never give your baby food that is past its best.

#### FREEZER STORAGE TIMES

Fruits 6 months

Vegetables 6 months

Purées with milk 4-6 weeks

Fish 10 weeks

Meat and chicken

Apple, pear, banana, papaya 4-5 months

Carrot, potato, zucchini, squash, green beans, rutabaga, sweet potato 4-5 months

Dried fruit, peach, kiwi, apricot, plum, melon, avocado 5-6 months

Peas, celery, bell pepper 5-6 months

Chicken, dairy products, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, greens, leek 6 months

Split pea, lima beans, lentils 8-9 months

Egg yolks 8-9 months

Fish 8-9 months

Citrus fruit, berries, tomato, mushrooms, honey, whole egg 1 year

Shellfish over 2 year

To thaw one meal, remove the relevant number of cubes of food from the bag (only one at the very beginning) and leave at room temperature for an hour. Heat thoroughly, cool, then serve immediately. If using a microwave, stir well to make sure there is an even distribution of heat, allow to cool. Always test the temperature of food before giving it to your baby. Fruits to be served cold can thaw in the refrigerator overnight.

Never re-freeze foods which have already been frozen, and never reheat them more than once.

When can they have...?

I have listed below when you should introduce particular foods to your baby. This is not an exhaustive list and you should refer to each chapter for more information.

## Meal Planners

In the next chapter I have devised some meal planners which will help you through the first weeks when you start to wean your baby. There are endless variations on the foods that can be given and the order in which they can be introduced.

If your baby's last meal is close to bed time, avoid giving him anything heavy or difficult to digest. This is certainly not the time to experiment with new foods if you both want a good night's sleep.

I have tried to give a wide choice of recipes, although I would expect that in practise meals that your baby enjoys would be repeated several times over the period of a week -- and this is where your freezer will come in handy.

In each subsequent chapter, there are meal planners for your baby which you may follow or simply use as a guide. Adapt the charts according to what is in season and what you are preparing for your family. From nine months onwards, you should be able to cook for your baby and family together, perhaps eating the recipes you give your baby for lunch and supper for your own supper.

In these later charts, I have set out four meals a day. However, many babies are quite satisfied with three meals and some healthy snacks.

Many of the vegetable purées in the early chapters can be transformed into a vegetable soup; and a number of the vegetable dishes can serve as good side dishes for the family. If you give the baby some of the vegetables you are preparing for the family, make sure they have not been salted. In the later chapters many recipes are suitable for the whole family.

After each recipe you will find a symbol of two faces, one smiling, the other gloomy, each with a check box. You will find these useful in recording the success (or otherwise) of your baby meal recipes!

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### Most helpful customer reviews

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

This cookbook has been absolutely wonderful! Another girl at work is making her baby ...

By Krissa L. Reiser

This cookbook has been absolutely wonderful! Another girl at work is making her baby food without any cookbook and she always says I am giving her such great ideas. The cookbook helps with variety and easy introductions of new foods mixed with food that she already likes. Although I don't follow the meal planners religiously, I found them immensely helpful as a guideline for what my baby eats. I would highly recommend this cookbook.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Does what it says on the book

By LiniAyre536

An excellent aide to feeding your baby and beyond. I like the chart detailing when is an ideal time to feed a solid and I especially like the myriad of recipes that are offered which would suit the whole family.

9 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Great baby food cook book!

By jt

This book has made a great addition to our "baby" cookbooks. The author, Annabel Karmel, shows parents how to make healthy, unprocessed, tasty foods for babies and toddlers. I equally love that many of the recipes for older babies and infants can easily be made for the whole family; this makes dinner time much easier. I like the details of the recipes. Annabel tells exactly how to prepare the ingredients and how to cook/prepare them. However, I wish this book explained the best way to store each recipe. For example, she explains how to prepare pears, but doesn't say if they freeze well or are best eaten right away. I tried to freeze them after I cooked them, but they turned brown and yucky looking. I like that there are suggestions for foods that I normally wouldn't think of feeding my baby (cauliflower, papaya, dried apricots, cantaloupe, parsnip, zucchini, etc). And I like that by incorporating these recipes, my baby will eat a wide range of colors and textures.

The chapters are laid out very nicely and organized; they start with an introduction explaining the particular stage of feeding, then followed by recipes, and ending with a meal planner. I really like the meal planner part because it shows what kinds of foods Annabel suggests at various times. It is a great thing to follow to add variety to your baby's diet. I know that before I started using this book, I found myself making the same thing over and over again for my baby and the meal planner really helps me to remember to add variety. Plus, you don't have to follow it exactly.

I like the size of the book, I like that the pages are thick (I spilled milk on a few and wiped them up and they still look fine), and I think the book is well illustrated.

My baby is still young (almost 8 months) so I try to make many of the foods a head of time and freeze them. I purchased some one ounce silicone ice cube trays and I use these to freeze the food. I think they make a good sized portion that usually isn't too big so most food doesn't go to waste; I can always thaw another cube if he is still hungry.

I received this book for free to review. However, this did not influence my opinions. All opinions are 100% honest.

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## About the Author

Annabel Karmel is the mother of three children and the UK's leading expert on feeding children. She works with leading US parenting websites such as Parents.com and has appeared on many TV shows, including the Today show and The View. Check out her popular app, Annabel's Essential Guide to Feeding Your Baby & Toddler, and visit her website, [AnnabelKarmel.com](http://AnnabelKarmel.com), to learn more.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BEST FIRST FOODS FOR YOUR BABY

Many mothers feel that, once their baby is three months old, they should be starting to feed him solids. In fact there is no 'right' age as every baby is different.

Physiologically, there is no rush to get your baby started on solids. A baby's digestive system is not fully matured for the first few months and foreign proteins very early on may increase the likelihood of allergic food problems later. However, be warned, socially there is a kind of competitive spirit amongst mothers to get their child on to puréed steak and fries as soon as possible! I would advise that, provided your child is satisfied and growing properly, you should wait until he is between four and six months old before starting to give him simple solid foods.

### Milk is Still the Major Food

It is very important to remember when starting your baby on solids that milk is still the most natural and the best food for growing babies. I would encourage mothers to try breast-feeding. Apart from the emotional benefits, breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants from infection. In the first few months, they are particularly vulnerable and the colostrum a mother produces in the first few days of breast-feeding is a very important source of antibodies which help to build up a baby's immune system. (There are enormous benefits in breast-feeding your child even for as little as one week.) It is also medically proven that breast-fed babies are less likely to develop certain diseases in later life.

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There is no fixed rule as to how much milk a baby should consume during the day. However, it is important to make sure (especially as it is highly likely that a bottle may not be finished at each feed) that up to the age of five months, your baby drinks milk at least four times a day. If the number of feeds is reduced too quickly, your baby will not be able to drink as much as is needed. Some mothers make the mistake of giving their baby solid food when he or she is hungry, when what he really needs is an additional milk feed.

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Dairy products like yogurt and cheese can be introduced after six months and are usually very popular with babies. Choose whole milk products rather than low-fat.

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Fresh foods just do taste, smell and look better than jars of pre-prepared baby foods. Neither is there any doubt that, prepared correctly, they are better for your baby (and you), for it is inevitable nutrients, especially vitamins, are lost in the processing of pre-prepared baby foods. Home-made food tastes quite different from the jars you can buy. (If you were ever to try a blind tasting of popular brands of baby foods, you would know that it is very difficult to recognise what particular food each jar contains!)

There is also a very limited variety of single fruit and vegetables. Most of the jars available contain bland combinations of foods puréed to the same consistency so that it is difficult for your child to differentiate one food from another. It can be quite a problem getting your baby to accept the coarser texture of home-made purees once he is used to the very smooth texture of commercially prepared baby foods. It is best therefore to start cooking for your baby yourself right from the beginning. I believe your child is less likely to become a fussy eater if he is used to a wide selection of tastes and textures from a very early age. You can 'train' your child to enjoy the flavors of fresh spinach or apple and pea purée rather than crave candy and doughnuts. Why give them sugary and fatty foods when healthy food can be just as enjoyable?

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## CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates and fat provide our bodies with their main source of energy. The former also provide fiber which adds bulk to our diet and acts as a natural laxative.

There are two types of carbohydrate: sugar is one and starch (which in complex form provides fiber) is the other. In both types there are two forms - the natural and the refined. In both cases, it is the natural form which provides a more healthy alternative.

## SUGARS

Natural

Fruit and Fruit juices

Vegetables

Vegetable juices

Refined

Sugars and honey

Sweetened cordials and sodas

Sweet gelatins

Jellies and other preserves

Cakes and cookies

## STARCHES

Natural

Whole-grain breakfast cereals, flour, bread and pasta

Brown rice

Potatoes Legumes, peas and lentils

Bananas and many other fruits and vegetables

Refined

Processed breakfast cereals (i.e. sugarcoated flakes)

White flour, breads and pasta

White rice

Sugary cookies

Cakes

FATS

Fats provide a concentrated source of energy. The body also needs to store some fat to prevent excessive loss of body heat. Thus a certain amount of fat is essential in everyone's diet. Foods that contain fats also contain the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. The problem is that many people eat too much fat and the wrong type of fat.

There are two types of fat - saturated, which mainly comes from animal sources, and unsaturated which comes from vegetable sources. It is the saturated fats which are the most harmful and which may lead to high cholesterol levels and coronary disease later in life.

It is important to give your baby whole milk for at least the first two years but try to reduce fats in cooking and use butter and margarine in moderation. Try to reduce saturated fats in your child's diet by cutting down on red meat, especially fatty meats like lamb; replace with more chicken and fish. This may in fact be a good time to review the whole family's eating habits, and to cut out all that butter on Daddy's toast in the morning!

FATS

Saturated

Butter

Meat

Lard, suet and drippings

Eggs

Cheese and full-fat yogurt

Cakes and cookies

Hard margarine

Whole milk

Unsaturated fats

Sunflower, grapeseed, safflower, sesame, soy, canola and olive oils Soft polyunsaturated margarine Oily fish (e.g. mackerel)

## VITAMINS

The possibility of vitamin deficiencies in the developed world should not be ignored. The children most at risk are those who follow a Vegan diet (i.e. no animal products at all) and those drinking cow's milk from the age of six months. Pediatricians recommend that these children should take a daily vitamin supplement until they are at least two.

For most children eating fresh food in sufficient quantity and drinking breast or formula milk until one year of age, vitamin supplements are unnecessary.

There are two types of vitamins - water-soluble (C and B complex) and fat-soluble (A, D, E and K). Water-soluble vitamins cannot be stored by the body so foods containing these should be eaten daily. They can also easily be destroyed by overcooking, especially when fruit and vegetables are boiled in water. You should try to preserve these vitamins by eating the foods raw or just lightly cooked (in a steamer, for instance).

There is some controversy over whether vitamin supplements can improve your child's IQ. As vitamins are necessary for the correct development of the brain and nervous system, it is important that a good supply of all vitamins is taken. However, a good balanced diet should supply all that is required and an excess of vitamins is potentially harmful. Good sources of all the major vitamins and minerals are given in the tables to the left.

## VITAMIN A

Essential for growth, healthy skin, tooth enamel and good vision.

Liver

Oily fish

Carrots

Dark green vegetables (e.g. broccoli) Sweet potatoes

Oranges

Squash

Tomatoes

Lentils

Watercress

Apricots and peaches

Whole milk and eggs

Butter and margarine

## VITAMIN B COMPLEX

Essential for growth, changing food into energy, for a healthy nervous system and as an aid to digestion. There are a large number of vitamins in the B group. Some are found in many foods, but no foods except for liver and yeast extract contain them all.

Meat, especially meat juices (so use in gravy) and liver

Fish

Dairy produce and eggs

Whole-grain cereals

Wheatgerm

Dark green vegetables

Potatoes

Yeast extract (e.g. Vegemite)

Nuts

Legumes

Bananas

## VITAMIN C

Is needed for growth, healthy tissue and healing of wounds. It helps in the absorption of iron.

Vegetables such as: broccoli; Brussels sprouts; greens; bell peppers; potatoes; spinach; cauliflower.

Fruits such as: oranges and other citrus fruits; blueberries; melon; papaya; strawberries and tomatoes

## VITAMIN D

Essential for proper bone formation, it works in conjunction with calcium. It is found in few foods, but is made by the skin in the presence of sunlight.

Oily fish

Liver

Oils

Eggs

Margarine

Dairy produce

VITAMIN E

Important for the composition of the cell structure, and helps the body to create and maintain red blood cells.

Vegetable oils

Margarine

Wheatgerm

Nuts

VITAMIN K

Aids in blood clotting, maintains bones, and is present in the intestine.

It is found in most vegetables and whole-grain cereals.

CALCIUM

Calcium is needed for strong bones good teeth and growth.

Dairy produce, especially milk Canned fish with bones (e.g. sardines, but only for older children)

Dried fruit

Bread and flour

Broccoli

Legumes

IRON

Iron is needed for healthy blood and muscles. A deficiency in iron is probably the most common and will leave your child feeling tired and run down.

Liver and red meat

Oily fish

Egg yolks

Dried fruits (especially apricots)

Whole-grain cereals

Lentils and legumes

Green leafy vegetables

Chocolate

WATER

Humans can survive for quite a time without food, but only a few days without water. Babies lose more water through their kidneys and skin than adults and also through vomiting and diarrhea.

Thus it is very important that your baby should not be allowed to dehydrate. Make sure he drinks plenty of fluids. Cool, boiled water is the best drink to give your baby on hot days particularly, as it will cool the body down quicker than any sugary drink.

It is really not necessary to give a very young baby anything to drink other than milk or plain water if he is just thirsty. Fruit sirups, cordials and other sweetened drinks should be discouraged to prevent dental decay. Don't be fooled if the packet says 'dextrose' - this is just a type of sugar.

If your baby refuses to drink water then give him unsweetened baby juice or fresh 100 percent fruit juices. Dilute according to instructions or for fresh juice use one part juice to three parts water, gradually increasing to half and half.

The Question of Allergies

It is fairly common for babies to inherit food allergies from their parents, and where there is a history of a particular food allergy, that food should only be introduced singly and with great care.

The commonest foods which carry a risk of allergic reaction in babies are cow's milk and dairy products, eggs, fish (especially shellfish), some fruits, nuts and foods containing gluten. Some babies (and older children) can also react to artificial food colorings and additives. The commonest allergic problems which may be triggered by adverse reactions to food are: nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; asthma; eczema; hayfever; rashes and swelling of the eyes, lips and face. This is one reason it is unwise to rush starting your baby on solid foods.

There is no need to be unduly worried about food allergy, unless there is a family history. The incidence of food allergy in normal babies is extremely small and, with the tendency to a later introduction of solid food between four and six months, they have become even less common. However, it is still children under the age of eighteen months who are most likely to develop an allergy to a particular food. Although a lot of children 'grow out of it' by the age of two, some food allergies - particularly a sensitivity to eggs, milk, shellfish or nuts - can last for life. If your child has an allergy, do tell friend's mums and the school when he is old enough.

Never be afraid to take your baby to the doctor if you are worried that there is something wrong. Young babies' immune systems are not fully matured and babies can become ill very quickly if they are not treated

properly and can develop serious complications.

## LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

Lactose intolerance is not actually an allergy. Children who suffer lactose intolerance lack the substance lactase, an enzyme present in the superficial layers of the small bowel, which breaks lactose down to simpler sugars. Lactose is present in all milks and these babies will not be able to drink breast or cow's milk. A soy formula is given.

Some children who are lactose intolerant are able to eat dairy products like cheese and yogurt with no ill effects.

## COW'S MILK PROTEIN ALLERGY

If your baby is sensitive to cow's milk, consult your doctor who will probably recommend a soy-based milk formula. Unmodified soy milk is not suitable as it is nutritionally inadequate. However, some babies who are allergic to cow's milk are also allergic to soy-based milks and for those babies there are a number of hypo-allergic milk formulas available on prescription. Breast milk is the best milk for babies who are allergic to cow's milk but mothers may need to limit dairy foods themselves as these can be transferred to their baby through breast milk.

No dairy products are tolerated in this condition and in the weaning diet milk-free vegetable or soy margarine may be substituted for butter and carob for milk chocolate. Very often babies outgrow this allergy by the age of two.

## EGGS

Avoid giving egg whites before one year. Cooked egg yolks may be given once the baby is well established in mixed feeding, between eight and nine months.

## FISH

Most pediatricians advise mothers not to give fish to their babies before eight months and to avoid all shellfish.

## FRUITS

Some children can have an adverse reaction to citrus and berry fruits. Avoid these before 1 year but be sure to choose a Vitamin-C-rich drink.

## NUTS

par

Nuts, even ground, should be avoided for at least the first seven months. Children under three can choke on whole nuts.

## GLUTEN

If there is a family history of gluten intolerance babies under six months must follow a gluten-free diet but it

is preferable for all young babies. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley and oats and gluten sensitivity can cause celiac disease which, although rare can be serious.

When buying baby cereals and rusks, choose varieties that are gluten-free. Baby rice is the safest to try at first and thereafter there are plenty of alternate gluten-free products such as soy, cornstarch, rice, millet and potato flour for thickening and baking, brown rice, rice noodles, buckwheat spaghetti etc.

## Preparing Baby Foods

Preparing and cooking baby foods is not difficult, but because you are dealing with a young baby, considerations like hygiene must be of the utmost importance.

## EQUIPMENT

Most of the equipment needed will already be in your kitchen -- mashers, graters, strainers etc -- but the following three pieces I consider are vital!

**Food mill** A hand-turned food mill or ricer with variable cutting discs pureés the food, separating it from the seeds and skin which can be difficult for the baby to digest. It is best used for fruit, vegetables, fish and the softer textured meats such as chicken and liver.

**Blender or food processor** This is useful for puréeing larger quantities. However, foods for young babies will often need to be pushed through a strainer afterwards to remove any seeds and skin.

**Steamer** The best way to preserve the fresh taste and vitamins in fruits and vegetables is to cook them in a steamer. It is worth buying a good multi-tiered steamer which will enable you to cook several different foods at the same time. (A colander over a saucepan along with a well-fitting lid, is a cheaper alternate.)

## STERILIZING

At first, it is very important to sterilize bottles, and particularly, the teats that your baby sucks, properly by whatever approved method you choose. Warm milk is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria and if bottles are not properly washed and sterilized, your baby can become very ill. It is also best to sterilize the dishes and spoons you use for feeding your baby. It would be impossible, however, to sterilize all the equipment you use for cooking and puréeing baby food, but take extra care to keep everything very clean.

Use a dishwasher if you have one; the water is at a much higher temperature than it would be possible to use if washing the utensils by hand and helps to sterilize your equipment. However, once it is removed from the dishwasher, it does not remain sterile; bottles should be filled with milk immediately and stored in the fridge. Dry utensils with paper towels rather than a non-sterile dish towel.

Milk bottles should continue to be sterilized until your baby is one year old, but there is really not much point sterilizing spoons or food containers beyond the age when your baby crawls and puts everything in reach into his mouth.

## COOKING BABY FOODS

Fruit and vegetables can lose nutrients when they are cooked so it makes sense to eat some both cooked and raw. However, raw ones would be difficult to digest for a young baby so, until the age of six months, most

fruit and vegetables (apart from ripe bananas) should be cooked. As the baby gains teeth and learns to chew, the fruit or vegetables can be cooked more lightly in order to retain Vitamin C and crispness. After about six months, your baby can have purées of raw fruit and fresh grated fruit; raw or very al dente vegetables can be given as a finger food.

Cook in many ways -- boiling, steaming, stewing or baking. Try to avoid fat-based methods of cooking such as frying (or cut down on the amount of fat used). Steaming, as mentioned above, is by far the best and, to maximize on nutritional benefits, the water in which or over which vegetables have cooked (so long as it does not contain salt) could be used as a drink or as the cooking water for something else such as pasta. Try also to maximize on fuel economy; steam a number of different foods at one time before puréeing and storing separately.

Cook fruit and vegetable purées for your baby by whichever method you choose. In each case make sure the purée is completely smooth, with no lumps. Later on you can adjust the texture of the puree to suit your baby as he starts to chew. Freeze any purée you are not using straightaway.

**Boiling or steaming** Wash fruit or vegetable carefully, peel, seed or pit as necessary and cut into small pieces. Add just enough water to cover and simmer until tender or steam (about 10 minutes, see individual recipes). Drain or remove from steamer, retaining the cooking water, then blend, mill or mash, adding some of the cooking water to bring it to the correct consistency for your baby.

**Microwaving** Peel, seed or pit the fruit or vegetable as necessary, and cut into slices. Put in a microwave dish with enough water just to cover and cover the dish with a lid. Microwave on High for about 3 minutes. Uncover, stir, re-cover and cook for another 2 minutes or until tender. Cooking times will vary according to how hard the fruit is to begin with. Blend, mash or mill to the right consistency, adding water as necessary.

## FREEZING BABY FOODS

Whenever possible, prepare more food than is immediately needed and freeze the remainder in ice-cube trays for future meals. There are a limited number of foods that do not freeze well (like bananas and avocados) but most foods can be frozen with excellent results. Thus, in one or two hours a week, you can prepare enough to feed your baby for a month -- making for a happier mother and baby and more time to spend together.

You will need a freezer which can freeze food to 0°F or below in 24 hours and sterile packaging. At the earliest stages, when only teaspoons of food are being taken, this means plastic ice-cube trays (sterilize these as well) and plastic freezer bags.

Cook and purée the food as described in the recipes, cover, leave to cool, then freeze until hard in ice-cube trays. Knock out and store in clearly labeled freezer bags. Label the food with the expiry date so you never give your baby food that is past its best.

## FREEZER STORAGE TIMES

Fruits 6 months

Vegetables 6 months

Purées with milk 4-6 weeks

Fish 10 weeks

Meat and chicken

Apple, pear, banana, papaya 4-5 months

Carrot, potato, zucchini, squash, green beans, rutabaga, sweet potato 4-5 months

Dried fruit, peach, kiwi, apricot, plum, melon, avocado 5-6 months

Peas, celery, bell pepper 5-6 months

Chicken, dairy products, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, greens, leek 6 months

Split pea, lima beans, lentils 8-9 months

Egg yolks 8-9 months

Fish 8-9 months

Citrus fruit, berries, tomato, mushrooms, honey, whole egg 1 year

Shellfish over 2 year

To thaw one meal, remove the relevant number of cubes of food from the bag (only one at the very beginning) and leave at room temperature for an hour. Heat thoroughly, cool, then serve immediately. If using a microwave, stir well to make sure there is an even distribution of heat, allow to cool. Always test the temperature of food before giving it to your baby. Fruits to be served cold can thaw in the refrigerator overnight.

Never re-freeze foods which have already been frozen, and never reheat them more than once.

When can they have...?

I have listed below when you should introduce particular foods to your baby. This is not an exhaustive list and you should refer to each chapter for more information.

Meal Planners

In the next chapter I have devised some meal planners which will help you through the first weeks when you start to wean your baby. There are endless variations on the foods that can be given and the order in which they can be introduced.

If your baby's last meal is close to bed time, avoid giving him anything heavy or difficult to digest. This is certainly not the time to experiment with new foods if you both want a good night's sleep.

I have tried to give a wide choice of recipes, although I would expect that in practise meals that your baby enjoys would be repeated several times over the period of a week -- and this is where your freezer will come in handy.

In each subsequent chapter, there are meal planners for your baby which you may follow or simply use as a guide. Adapt the charts according to what is in season and what you are preparing for your family. From nine months onwards, you should be able to cook for your baby and family together, perhaps eating the recipes you give your baby for lunch and supper for your own supper.

In these later charts, I have set out four meals a day. However, many babies are quite satisfied with three meals and some healthy snacks.

Many of the vegetable purées in the early chapters can be transformed into a vegetable soup; and a number of the vegetable dishes can serve as good side dishes for the family. If you give the baby some of the vegetables you are preparing for the family, make sure they have not been salted. In the later chapters many recipes are suitable for the whole family.

After each recipe you will find a symbol of two faces, one smiling, the other gloomy, each with a check box. You will find these useful in recording the success (or otherwise) of your baby meal recipes!

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