

Vegetables for babies and toddlers

Vegetables provide many vitamins and minerals, important for growth and development of babies and toddlers. They can be used as first foods, and including them in your little ones diet will help set up great habits for a lifetime.



Preparation

- Select good quality fresh vegetables.
- Wash them well.



- Peel and remove seeds if necessary.
- Cut into even sized pieces.



- Boil, steam or microwave with a small amount of water until soft.



- Purée, sieve, or use a handheld blender ensuring that the vegetables are free from lumps.

Images courtesy of vegetables.co.nz

Alternatively, prepare them to the age appropriate texture (overleaf). Do not add sugar, salt, butter or cream. It may taste bland to you, but it is all new to babies.

Always test for temperature to avoid burning your baby's mouth.



Storing

Freeze in small portions, e.g. ice block trays to be used in the next 3 or 4 weeks.

Thaw a portion in the microwave or over boiling water. Stir well. If using a microwave, stand vegetables for 2-3 minutes and test for temperature before serving.

From around 6 months

Texture: Purée. Soft, smooth, runny.

Thin puréed vegetables by adding a small amount of expressed breast milk or formula if needed.

Which ones: Choose first vegetables from potato, kumara, pumpkin, carrot, kamokamo, cassava.

Tip: Start with a small amount (1/2 - 2 teaspoons) of one puréed vegetable and gradually increase amount. Introduce only one new food every 2-4 days. If rejected, leave for a few days before trying again.

From 7-8 months

Texture: Thicker purées, food can now be mashed with a fork.

Which ones: To get your baby used to a wide range of vegetables and textures introduce other vegetables e.g. cooked cauliflower, marrow, courgette, broccoli, yam, peas, swede, turnip, parsnip, puha, taro, silverbeet and spinach. Remove any seeds and stringy bits.

Tip: Offer new vegetables one at a time, maybe mixing a new one with a favourite. If a new food is rejected, keep trying as it can take repeated attempts for an infant to accept a new food - sometimes up to 7-10 times!

Finger Foods (from 7-8 months)

Little bite-sized portions of cooked vegetables make an excellent snack, or can be used as finger foods as part of a meal. Try cooked potatoes, kumara, pumpkin, carrot and yams for great taste and texture.

Prepare as per instructions but leave as small pieces so your infant can hold them, ensuring texture is very soft.

Infants can be offered raw finger foods (wrapped in a piece of muslin to stop pieces breaking off) such as:

- whole small green beans
- celery sticks/slices
- carrot sticks/slices

Let your child chew and suck on the food through the muslin.



8-12 months

Texture: More lumpy textures, soft chunks, grated, chopped, as well as finger foods.

Which ones: Cooked capsicum, eggplant and onion.

From 12 months

Textures: A variety of textures.

Which ones: Family foods, including finely chopped salad vegetables eg lettuce, cucumber.

It is recommended breastfeeding/infant formula be continued until they are at least a year old. Until 8-9 months, breast milk/formula should be offered before solids. This information is specifically about fresh vegetables. However, it is important to also introduce meat, breads and cereals, fruit and dairy products as per the Ministry Of Health guidelines.

