

Vegetables for babies & toddlers

Vegetables provide lots of nutrients and are important for growth and development. Vegetables (fresh, canned* or frozen) are great first foods and including them in your little one's diet will help set up healthy habits for a lifetime.

Preparation



- Select good quality vegetables.
- Wash them well.



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



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



- Purée, sieve, or use a handheld blender, to make sure the vegetables don't have any lumps.

Alternatively, prepare them to the age-appropriate texture (over page). Babies don't need added sugar, salt, butter or cream in their foods. It may taste bland to you but it is all new to babies. Always test the 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.

*If using canned vegetables, look for no or low salt.

From around 6 months

Texture: Purée. Soft, smooth, runny. Puréed vegetables can be thinned by adding a little expressed breast milk or formula if needed.

Which ones: Choose vegetables that mash easily and without seeds and skins e.g. potato, kūmara, pumpkin, carrot, kamokamo, cassava, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, pūhā, watercress, taro leaves, bok choy.

Tip: Start with a small amount (½ - 2 teaspoons) of one puréed vegetable and gradually increase amount. Introduce increasingly thick puréed and lumpy mashed vegetables.

From 7-8 months

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

Which ones: Try a wide variety e.g. cooked cauliflower, marrow, courgette, broccoli, yam, peas, swede, turnip, parsnip, pūhā, taro, silverbeet, and spinach. Remove any seeds and stringy bits.

Tip: Try mixing a new vegetable with a favourite to help baby try new tastes.

If a new food is rejected, leave it for a few days then try again. Keep trying every few days as it can take up to 7-10 times for some babies to enjoy a food!

Finger Food (from 7-8 months)

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

Prepare and cook the vegetables but leave as small pieces so your baby can hold them. Make sure the texture is very soft.

Babies can also be offered raw finger foods wrapped in a piece of muslin to stop pieces breaking off. Try whole small green beans, celery or carrots (sliced or cut in sticks).

Let your baby 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 and eggplant, cucumber (peeled and cut into sticks).

From 12 months

Textures: A variety of textures.

Which ones: Family foods, including finely chopped salad vegetables e.g. lettuce, tomatoes.

It is recommended babies continue to be offered breast milk (or infant formula) until at least 12 months. Up to 8-9 months, the milk feeds are most important and should be offered before solid foods.

This information is specifically about vegetables. However, it is important to introduce a wide variety of other foods also (such as fruits, breads, cereals, dairy products, fish and meats) as per the Ministry of Health Guidelines.

For more information
and recipes visit

**vegetables**
.co.nz