



Offer a Variety of Foods!

Take steps to reduce
heavy metals.

Recent news about heavy metals found in baby food can leave parents with lots of questions. Here are some tips from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and CDPH/WIC.

There are several simple steps parents can take to reduce their child's exposure to heavy metals in foods.

- **Offer a variety of foods.** Give your child a variety of fruits, vegetables (wash in cool water before preparing and serving), grains, and lean protein. Eating a variety of healthy foods that are rich in essential nutrients can lower the exposure to metals found in some foods. How do you offer more variety? Include lots of different colors, textures, sizes, and shapes of foods throughout the day. Find more information at [CDPH/WIC Feed Me 6 to 12 months](#). Also, ask your pediatrician about a diet for your child that includes a variety of age-appropriate, healthy foods.
- **Switch up your grains.** Fortified infant cereals can be a good source of nutrition, especially iron, for babies. Include a variety of grains in your baby's diet, such as oat, barley, couscous, quinoa, farro, and bulgur for proper growth and development. Multi-grain infant cereals can be a good choice. Rice tends to absorb more [arsenic](#) from groundwater than other crops. Rice cereal does not have to be the first cereal or first food given to infants.

- **Address lead hazards in your home.** There are other important ways to help reduce your baby's exposure to heavy metals. The most common source of lead exposure, for example, is from peeling or chipping paint from older homes. Soil, some cosmetics and spices, water, and certain occupations and hobbies can also be sources of exposure. Ask WIC for a copy of CDPH/WIC Well Fed Means Less Lead.
- **Breastfeed if possible.** Breastfeeding, rather than formula feeding, also can help reduce exposure to metals. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [recommends](#) breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for your baby for about 6 months.



What are heavy metals?

Metals are found naturally in the Earth's crust. They also are released into our environment as pollution and get into the water and soil used to grow food.

Metals can also get into food from food manufacturing and packaging. Some of the most common metals that get into food, according to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, include inorganic arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury. Lowering levels of toxic elements in foods is a high priority for the FDA.

Can heavy metals in baby food harm my baby?

The low levels of heavy metals found in baby foods likely are a relatively small part of a child's overall heavy metal exposure risk. However, exposure from all sources should be minimized. Heavy metal exposure can be harmful to the developing brain. But keep in mind that many genetic, social, and environment factors influence healthy brain development, and heavy metal exposure is just one of these.



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