

FEEDING/Baby's First Foods

OVERVIEW

There are a lot of ideas about what should constitute a baby's first food. Do you make your own? Buy prepared food? Oatmeal? Cereal? Banana? Whatever baby reaches for?

HIDDEN HAZARDS

It's no secret that pesticides used in agriculture can end up in foods. Other chemicals present when crops are grown can also end up in foods. Such is the case of **arsenic** in rice. Arsenic is present in rice paddies due to natural variations in soil, and from historic use of arsenic as a pesticide. Rice cereal can contain up to six times the levels of arsenic as other grains. Refined foods can pick up chemicals and materials used during processing and in packaging. This includes **phthalates** and **bisphenols**.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting to introduce foods or beverages aside from breast milk/formula until babies are six months old. Babies benefit when nursing continues through at least the first year of life, or longer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When choosing a first grain, skip over rice. Oatmeal, quinoa, and barley all have much lower levels of arsenic. If you are buying prepared baby food, consider food packaged in glass with bisphenol-free lids. Next best is solid polypropylene plastic, and least preferable are plastic pouches. Pouches in particular are very challenging to recycle due to their many layers. If possible, choose organic foods. You can reduce chemicals from processing by preparing your own simple foods by pureeing fresh fruits and vegetables, best in a blender with a glass jar. Don't have access to organic food? Check out EWG's high and low-pesticide conventional foods to reduce pesticide exposure.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Learn more about the hidden hazards by reviewing the [glossary](#) or take a deep dive by reading [Safer Products for Babies and Toddlers: Resources and Recommendations for Retailers](#).

Healthy Babies Bright Futures tested [infant cereals for arsenic](#). Learn about what they found and safer alternatives.

Environmental Working Group [tests produce for pesticides](#).