

# 14 Superfoods for your baby and how to serve them



Your baby needs a variety of macro and micronutrients to grow and thrive. Here are some of the important ones:

## **Protein:**

Protein supplies our bodies' structural blocks and it is extremely important for growing, development and immunity. From about 6-7 months babies need a good source of protein in the diet in addition to the protein they are getting from breast milk or formula.



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## **Iron:**

Iron helps supply oxygen to cells and it is especially important during rapid growth. It also plays a vital role in brain development. To make sure your baby is getting enough iron, offer some iron rich foods twice a day from about 6-7 months, especially if you are breastfeeding. Formula is fortified with iron. Best solid food sources are meat, beans, leafy greens and fortified foods.

## **Zinc:**

Zinc is crucial for maintaining the immune function, cognitive development, cell growth and repair. It is usually found in iron-rich foods and if your baby is not a vegan or vegetarian it is easy to meet his needs. If you are formula feeding your baby, it helps to know that many formulas are fortified with zinc.

## **Fats:**

Fats should not be restricted in the first two years of life. Try incorporating some fat like butter, oil, nut or seed butter or avocado into most solid foods your baby is eating to boost his brain development and help with vitamin absorption.



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DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) are Omega 3 acids that are especially beneficial for brain and eye development. Best sources of DHA and EPA are cold water fatty fish like salmon, tuna and sardines, fortified eggs, fortified milk and breast milk. ALA comes from plant foods like nuts and seeds and their oils. It needs an additional metabolic step in order to be absorbed by the body. If your baby is vegan or vegetarian, he may need a supplementation to meet his needs.

## **Vitamin D:**

Vitamin D is important for calcium absorption, immunity, as well as reducing risk for chronic and autoimmune conditions. It is not very common in dietary sources, unless foods are fortified. The best way to get enough vitamin D is through exposure to sunlight. If your baby is not getting enough sunlight or is dark skinned, he may need a supplementation.

## **Vitamin C:**

Vitamin C – improves iron absorption and supports immune system. Most fruit and vegetables contain plenty of vitamin C.

## **Vitamin A:**

Vitamin A – is important for proper vision and healthy skin. Dairy products, orange and dark green vegetables and fruit are all good sources.



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Food	Nutrients	Serving suggestions
Avocado	Fat, vitamin C	Cut into wedges and serve as finger food Mash into a puree
Beans and lentils	Protein, iron, zinc	Prepare a puree Offer as a finger food if your baby can use pincer grasp Mix into patties for finger foods Use in mixed stews and soups
Butter	Fats, including DHA and EPA	Add to purees or other mixed dishes Serve melted as a dip for finger foods
Cereal, fortified	Iron, zinc	Mix into purees Use for dusting finger foods
Dark leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, collard greens)	Vitamin C, vitamin A, iron	Serve tender leaves like spinach raw, as finger food. Cook and puree tougher greens. Use as a single ingredient puree or mix into mixed dishes.
Eggs	Fat, protein, vitamin D, vitamin A, zinc, iron	Serve boiled or scrambled as a finger food, mash the egg yolk to serve as a puree. Add egg yolk to mixed purees.
Full fat yogurt	Protein, fat, vitamin D	Feed with a spoon Allow to eat with hands Practice self feeding with a spoon when the baby is interested
Full fat cheese	Protein, fat, vitamin D	Shred for self feeding as a finger food Melt into mixed dishes
Nut and seed, as butters and powder	Protein, fats, including ALA	For butter: Spread very thinly on a piece of toast and cut into graspable sticks for an easy finger food For powder: Use to dust finger foods Add to drinks Both: Mix into purees Add into other mixed dishes
Oils	Fats, including ALA	Add to purees and other mixed dishes Serve as a dip for finger foods
Orange fruit and vegetables (carrots, pumpkin, mango, sweet potato)	Vitamin C, vitamin A	Serve mango cut into sticks as finger food or puree. Steam, boil or roast carrots, pumpkin or sweet potato and serve as a finger food, single ingredient puree or mix into mixed dishes.
Red meat such as beef, pork and lamb	Protein, fat, iron and zinc	Make a puree Cook until very soft and use as finger food Use ground meat to make finger foods
Salmon, tuna, sardines and other fatty fish	Fats including DHA and EPA, protein	Steam or panfry and make a puree. Cook and serve in flakes as finger food Use in mixed dishes
Tofu	Iron, protein, fat	Serve raw, bake or panfry. Cut into sticks to serve as a finger food. Silken tofu can be mixed into purees.

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## **Natalia Stasenko, Registered Dietitian and Child Nutritionist**

When her first child was small, Natalia made her share of feeding mistakes and battled a case of extreme picky eating that triggered her interest in pediatric nutrition.

In order to get to the bottom of the art and science of feeding kids, she trained as a Registered Dietitian at Columbia University, Teachers College in New York.

After a few years of running a successful nutrition private practice in NYC and consulting for various companies and agencies including Head Start, Natalia launched [Feeding Bytes](#) – an online program for parents where they can get the best professional advice on feeding their children from the comfort of their home.

As a national pediatric nutrition expert, Natalia has contributed to numerous media outlets including Parents Magazine, Pregnancy and Newborn Magazine, Kiwi magazine and Huffington post.

[Read Natalia's articles here.](#)

Recently, she cowrote a cookbook [Real Baby Food](#) – an up to date resource on feeding children from 6 months to 3 years.

To get support in feeding your child and the whole family, read [Natalia's blog](#) or join her [Facebook community](#).