

Heating Baby Food

When heating baby food, it's important to follow a few food safety rules to ensure that your baby's meal is tasty and nutritious... with no unwelcome bacteria!

Is it OK to reheat cooked food for my baby?

Absolutely – in fact, many parents make large batches of food in advance and then store them for future use. If you are making food for baby that you intend to store, then you should cool it quickly, then freeze or refrigerate it immediately (learn more about how to freeze baby food and how to prepare baby food safely).

When heating baby food, you need to ensure that it is piping hot throughout. Don't be tempted to just partially warm the food, so that your baby will be able to eat it immediately – it needs to be thoroughly heated in order to destroy any bacteria that may be present. You should then set it aside and allow it to cool to a comfortable serving temperature.

What if my baby doesn't finish his meal? Is it safe to warm it up for another time?

No – heating baby food for a second time could be harmful and may lead to food poisoning. Always throw away any leftovers at the end of each meal.

Can I reheat baby food if it contains ingredients that were previously frozen?

This is a common question – and the answer is that you can.

It is safe to thaw frozen food (like meat) – cook it for your baby – prepare a meal – cool the meal – freeze it and then – thaw and reheat it at a future date.

The only exception would be if the meal contains breast milk – **IT IS NOT SAFE TO RE-FREEZE PREVIOUSLY FROZEN BREAST MILK.**

How should I heat my baby's food?

One way to successfully heat food for your baby is to place the food in a heat safe dish and sit the dish over a small pan of simmering water. You need to stir the food often to ensure that it heats evenly.

Many parents, though, find this a slow method of heating baby food and opt to use the microwave instead.

But is heating baby food in the microwave safe?

Whether or not you choose to use the microwave to warm your baby's meals is for you to decide.

Many parents love the convenience of the microwave – hungry babies aren't known for their patience and using a microwave certainly cuts down on the waiting time.

But some families do not like to use microwave ovens at all and believe that cooking or heating any foods in them can have negative health implications.

A visitor to our site recently expressed concern about the information provided by the article 10 Reasons to Throw Out Your Microwave. There are certainly some alarming statements made in this article – although this PDF document, Microwave Myths – Fact vs Fiction addresses and questions the validity of these claims.

As we said, it's for you to decide.

We feel – along with many leading baby care sites – that heating baby food in the microwave is safe...
BUT ONLY IF THE FOLLOWING SAFETY PRECAUTIONS ARE OBSERVED.

- Make sure that the food container is **safe to use in the microwave**. Microwave-safe containers should be marked as such. Heating baby food in other types of plastic storage containers, like take-out containers or margarine tubs, can cause potentially harmful chemicals to leach into the food. Even microwave-safe plastic wrap should not be in direct contact with your baby's food as it heats.
- Baby food should be covered when you heat it in the microwave. Use either a lid or plastic wrap suitable for use in the microwave (but please note the warning above). Keeping the food covered is important because it holds in any moisture produced and helps the food to heat evenly and safely.
- Always remove aluminum foil from food bound for the microwave – NEVER place foil inside the microwave. Similarly, some plastic bags (like storage or grocery bags) are unsuitable for microwave use.
- Food should be heated until it is steaming hot. Allow it to stand and then check its temperature using a food thermometer – it should be at least 165 deg F.
- After heating baby food in the microwave, stir it thoroughly to disperse any hot spots. Allow it to cool to an ideal serving temperature.
- If you use your microwave to thaw foods that you plan to cook for your baby, then you need to **cook these foods immediately**. Foods thawed in the microwave sometimes start to cook – setting the food aside to fully cook later on may encourage the growth of bacteria.