

Your complete guide to solid feeding during baby's first year.

Tempting Tiny Taste Buds

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# Tempting Tiny Taste Buds

*Tempting Tiny Taste Buds By Christine Albury*



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throughout your baby's first year*  
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## **Should I Peel Fruits and Veggies For My Baby?**

There are several reasons why you might want to consider peeling fruits and vegetables for your baby.

- To make them easier for your baby to digest.
- Because the taste of the peel may not be to your baby's liking.
- To prevent choking
- To remove pesticide residues

Let's look at each issue in a little more detail.

### **Can babies digest peel?**

As with many aspects of infant nutrition, this depends on the individual.

In some cases, consuming the peel of a food can cause an upset tummy. It is also possible that fruit or vegetable peel could trigger an allergic reaction in a sensitive baby, as the allergenic potency of some foods (including apples and peaches) is higher in the peel than the flesh of the fruit.

Yet many babies will eat fruit and veggie skins with no problems whatsoever!

Our advice (with your doctor's consent) is to carefully monitor your baby's reaction to a food both with and without the peel. So, when you first introduce a new fruit or vegetable to your baby, peel it before you cook or serve it.

Once you are confident that the food agrees with your baby, then you can try cooking it UNpeeled. As long as you don't introduce any other new foods at the same time, you will easily be able to spot if leaving the peel on caused a problem for your baby. You can then try again when his digestive system is a little more mature.

If you choose to introduce solids to your baby before the recommended age of 6 months, then we would suggest peeling all fruits and vegetables before you cook them.

Some babies don't like the taste of fruit or vegetable peel

They may find it too strong, or bitter - in which case you should, of course, remove it from the foods you serve to them.

Try again from time to time, though - fruit and vegetable peel is very nutritious!

### **Choking**

Peeling fruits and vegetables for your baby DOES minimize the risk of choking. Even if you puree unpeeled produce for your baby, it can be hard to get it completely smooth and little bits of peel may remain.

We would certainly recommend removing the peel from foods that are to be pureed for very young babies.

Until you are completely confident about your baby's chewing abilities, you should also peel items that are to be given to your baby as finger foods.

## **Pesticide residues on your baby's fruits and vegetables**

What a horrible thought!

Yet the fact is that the skins of many produce items DO harbour hazardous pesticide residues.

Pesticides are believed to contribute to behavioural problems, learning difficulties and serious health problems. Babies, whose little bodies easily absorb pesticides, are particularly vulnerable.

A 1996 report by the National Academy of Sciences confirmed that both the severity and nature of health risks to infants from pesticides differ from those to adults. The problem is compounded by the fact that babies tend to eat a lot of the same TYPE of produce - meaning that they may regularly be exposed to the same type of pesticide.

But this does not mean that you should avoid fresh fruit and vegetables in your baby's diet.

The benefits of a diet rich in fresh produce far outweigh the risks.

Instead, you should take precautions to eliminate - or at least minimize - these risks.

### **Peeling fruits and veggies to remove pesticide residues**

Peeling fruits and vegetables is the most obvious preventative measure—

some experts claim that up to 99% of pesticide residues can be removed in this way. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most pesticide residues remain on the skin of produce items and do not penetrate into the food.

Food safety recommendations from the FDA also include removing the outer leaves of items like lettuce and cabbage. The UK's Food Standards Agency, however, states that peeling fruits and veggies to remove pesticide residues is NOT necessary in the UK (although we'll leave that up to you to decide!).

[Won't peeling my baby's fruits and vegetables reduce their nutritional value?](#)

To some extent, it will.

Whilst pesticides are mainly concentrated in the skin, so are vitamins, nutrients and fibre!

So what is the alternative?

The FDA and the UK's Food Standards Agency suggest washing produce as an alternative to peeling.

If you choose to do this, then you should wash and scrub items thoroughly under warm, running water (warm water removes pesticide residues more efficiently than cold). There are special "produce washes" that you can buy to help you - but never use regular soap, as it could cause health problems for your baby.

Soak delicate items like strawberries, then rinse them, as they are difficult to

scrub clean!

Systemic pesticides can't be washed - or peeled - away

Whilst most official recommendations for removing pesticide residues include peeling or washing produce, few address the problem of systemic pesticides.

These types of pesticides are often applied to the roots or soil of crops and are then "taken up" by the entire plant. Their purpose is to destroy pests as they attack the crop tissue... the problem is that you cannot remove the residue. The safety of systemic pesticides in our food is -of course - a matter of controversy.

The solution? Organic produce

It may cost a little extra, but for peace of mind it is well worth buying organic produce for your baby.

It is not essential to peel organic produce when you prepare baby food, neither are you faced with possible contamination by systemic pesticides. And - of course - organic fruits and veggies often taste far better than their non-organic counterparts.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** ANY fruits or vegetables that you plan to give your baby should be washed - whether or not you are going to peel them and whether or not they are organic.

### ***Why?***

Because bacteria may be present on the skins of any produce items (organic foods may be contaminated by organic fertilizers, for example).

You should also wash foods like bananas - even though the peel isn't eaten. Just imagine that the skin is contaminated with bacteria. Your baby will handle the skin, spreading the bacteria to the fruit itself - and to his mouth.

### **Ensure that your produce is certified organic (or 100% organic)**

Anything less and the risk of pesticide residues may still exist. The farming requirements for certified organic produce vary around the world, but generally demand that no synthetic chemicals are used as the crops grow, or have been used on the same soil in the past (usually up to 3 years).

Other tips to minimize risks to your baby from pesticide residues

- Offer your baby as varied a diet as possible, to prevent the possibility of repeated exposure to the same pesticide.
- Avoid fruits and vegetables with bruised or mouldy skins. These tend to contain a higher concentration of pesticides.
- Buy locally produced fruits and vegetables. Produce that has to be shipped any significant distance will have been treated to help it “survive” the journey.
- The same applies to “out of season” produce, which will have been shipped from overseas



### **The "Dirty Dozen"**

Certain fruits and vegetables have been identified as containing the highest concentration of pesticide residues, and have been nicknamed "the Dirty Dozen"...

- Apples
- Celery
- Cherries
- Imported grapes
- Lettuce
- Nectarines
- Peaches
- Pears
- Potatoes
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Sweet bell peppers

The items found to be LOWEST in pesticide residues are

- Asparagus
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Frozen peas
- Kiwi

- Mango
- Onions
- Papaya
- Pineapple

If possible, buy the organic versions of the produce in the first list, which will pose the biggest risk to your baby.

### AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

Once your baby is enjoying these vegetables and fruits, how about combining the two for some unique and surprisingly delicious flavours?

Apples and carrots are wonderful mixed together - have a taste for yourself and see! I also recommend apples or bananas with sweet potato - it may sound strange, but it tastes great!

This is a wonderful recipe, given to me by a friend, that you may like to try...just remember to save some for baby!

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