



A journey into the world of flavor

Benefits from the beginning

- Shape baby's palate
- Healthy food preferences
- Flavor exposure

Do you want your baby to grow up with a love of veggies? It might sound like a dream, but you have the power to shape their palate. When you introduce healthy foods the right way – and at the right time – your little one can learn to enjoy a variety of healthy flavors.

The beginning of the flavor journey starts before your baby enters the world. Within 15 weeks from conception, baby begins to sample flavors in your amniotic fluid. Moms who eat a diverse range of healthy foods during pregnancy and when breastfeeding enjoy a head-start at shaping healthy food preferences.

FLAVOR TRAINING & THE FOUR BASIC FLAVORS

BITTER



Babies need exposure to embrace the bitter flavor. Introduce bitter veggies and fruits early, including broccoli, arugula, kale, brussels sprouts, cranberries, mint, and grapefruit.

SOUR



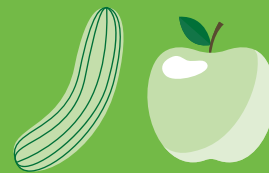
The sour taste detects acidity in foods. Introduce small amounts of things like grapefruit, plain yogurt, fermented foods, lemons, or limes.

UMAMI



Umami is an earthy, savory flavor present in certain foods. Mushrooms, tomatoes, eggplant, and asparagus are good plant-based umami foods for infants.

SWEET / SALTY



Babies have a natural preference for these flavors and do not need to be included in flavor training.

Opening the flavor training window

- Flavor training window
- Introducing a wide range of savory flavors
- Repetition is key

The Flavor Training Window

Breastmilk and/or formula should be the only source of nutrition for baby until they reach 4 months. However, from around 4 to 7 months an exciting window for flavor training opens where infants are open to trying almost anything. Using this 2-3 month window to introduce a wide variety of 'tastes' can really help in shaping flavor preferences.

All humans are born with a taste for sweet and salty. Because of this, there is no need to train your baby to like sweet and salty foods. But bitter and sour foods can take some getting used to. So try introducing vegetables spanning the whole flavor spectrum, in particular, bitter, umami and earthy. Variety and repetition are key here.

Tiny Tastes

If we introduce these before nutritional demands kick in (all baby's current nutritional demands are met by milk feeds) we give baby a head start to accepting a wide variety of foods.

Remember, this step is solely about flavor training and acceptance before nutritional requirements become important, so have some fun with it and don't worry how much actually goes in!



Flavor Training Guidelines

Step 1: A Solid Start

You can start introducing flavors to baby at around 4 to 5 months - it can be as simple as offering a tiny taste of a vegetable puree on the tip of a clean finger or small spoon. And remember, it's all about flavor at this stage, until starting solids for nutrition at around 6 months.

Step 2: Exposure is Everything

Take advantage of this willingness to try any food and introduce lots of veggies. The key is variety and repetition. It can take 10 exposures or more before your baby accepts a new flavour! So don't get put off by those funny faces. Exposure to a variety of vegetables will shape baby's taste preferences as they grow older. A small taste is all that is required.



Step 3: Mix it Up

Start with thin single-vegetable purees, introducing new vegetables often.

Eventually, you can mix vegetable purees, but avoid mixing veggie purees with something sweet. During flavor training and beyond, the goal is for baby to learn to enjoy vegetables without any adulterations. Hold off finger foods until closer to 6 months.

Before long baby will be loving their veggies – setting them up for a healthy, happy life.

GOOD FLAVOR TRAINING GUIDE

TRY TO:



Use a veggies-first approach



Concentrate on sour, bitter, and umami flavors



Give lots of variety



Introduce the same food 10+ times (10 yuks to 1 yum)



Use warm and cold foods

BEST TO AVOID:



Introduce foods before 4 months



Mix sweet and savory flavors



Get discouraged when baby does not like a new food the first time around



Wait long periods before introducing new foods



Give foods with added sugar or salt

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Top Tips

We recommend avoiding most fruits and all infant cereals during this critical window. Doing so is not necessary for flavor training, and might decrease baby's desire for less sweet foods. Instead, use this opportunity to introduce a wide variety of vegetables.

A vegetables-first approach helps mold your child's palate. Start with single-vegetable preparations that you share time and again. The trick is variety and repetition. And no need to introduce fruits or cereals. Instead, use this opportunity to introduce as many veggies as you can.

Avoid masking these flavors with something sweeter. It can take 10 exposures or more before your baby accepts a new flavor. We call this the 10 yuks to 1 yum tendency.

Your infant needs to learn how to move food to the back of their mouth and swallow, and a thin puree is easier because it's similar to breastmilk.

If baby doesn't immediately grasp how to suck off a spoon, that's okay. Put some puree on your finger and let them taste it from there first. And when you do transition to spoon-feeding, resist scraping the spoon on their upper lip. This encourages them to push food out of their mouth, known as the tongue-thrust reflex.

Once baby can swallow easily, gradually thicken the puree. A thick puree is the intermediary step between a thin puree and solid food.

There's no need to wait a long time between introducing new foods that aren't potential allergens. Waiting 4 or 5 days before trying a new veggie is a lost opportunity. You have a short window when your infant isn't overly picky. Take advantage of it!



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Spanning the flavor spectrum



Remember, baby is born with the innate taste for sweet and salty. It is veggie exposure that can make your child less picky as they transition from milk to solids.

While not essential, exposing baby to vegetable flavors from 4 months will certainly help when solids play an important role in their nutrition. Try introducing as many vegetable flavors as you can. And yes, even those ones you might not like, baby won't know any different! Over the next 1-2 months, introduce as many new flavors as you can—particularly vegetable flavors.



At this early stage, you only need to give tastes of food. Around ½ teaspoon is sufficient for baby to experience new flavors. They may not love it the first time around, but that's okay! With repeated exposure, their palate will adjust. This is the 10 yuks to 1 yum idea.

Flavor training is critical in shaping dietary preferences that baby will carry with them into adulthood. By taking advantage of the flavor window and introducing a variety of healthy foods at a young age, you can support the long-term health of your child and protect baby from lifestyle-related illnesses like obesity and type-2 diabetes.

But remember, in these very early stages it's about 'flavor exposure' not 'nutrition' so have some fun with it and don't worry how much actually goes in!

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