



Fabulous Fall Nutrition

At Diapers Unlimited, we are concerned about your baby's health. We are all trying to figure out ways to promote good nutrition and exercise. What better time than during the fall when all the fresh produce is being harvested? It's the perfect time to think about healthier and less expensive ways to feed your child.

What exactly is your baby eating? **Over the years we've learned more about why processed foods, while convenient, are not the best option.** Making baby food at home doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming.

We found several good resources that you can utilize to **provide your baby with the same vitamins and nutrients you are already providing to the rest of your family.** This option works best with fresh vegetables and fruits, can be done daily while you prepare your own meal, or in as little as 30 minutes per week. Benefits of making your own baby food include:

- Increased nutritional value
- Elimination of additives and increased parental control
- Improved freshness
- Added variety
- Lower costs

Two sisters, who are the mothers of five children, believe that "when you make it yourself, you know it's better". They founded a company that provides recipes and storage containers for baby food (including breast milk) that are BPA free. In addition, they have food guides that detail the types of food to be introduced based on your child's age (and what foods to avoid). To read more about the benefits and see their products go to http://freshbaby.com/healthy_eating/healthyeating_featured_03.cfm

The easiest way to blend and puree fresh food is with a blender or a dishwasher safe food mill. Kidco makes the one we used. You just place the food on the top (cook veggies first) and hand grind it onto a plate. I used this daily and loved it! \$12.99 at Target or look on line at the Kidco website http://www.kidco.com/main.taf?erube_fh=kidco&kidco.submit.feedingproducts=1&kidco.step=1&kidco.bc=fd

The most high tech system we've seen is a Baby Cook (approx \$150) manufactured by Beaba and sold by Williams Sonoma. The Baby Cook looks like a food processor only it cooks the food first, then you blend it.

Now that school has started, think about the foods that you pack in your child's lunch, as well as what you pack it in.

- Use whole grain bread instead of white bread for sandwiches. Add lettuce and tomato.
- Use mustard or light dressings on sandwiches instead of mayo.
- Pack fresh fruit or canned fruit that is not in heavy syrup.
- Fresh vegetables that have been cut up (carrots, celery, grape tomatoes, and cucumbers) are an excellent addition to the lunch bag. Include a small cup of veggie dip made from Greek yogurt and a package of Hidden Valley Ranch dressing mix or Good Season's Italian Dressing mix.
- Go for the 100-calorie snack bags of chips or cookies as an occasional treat. Be sure to only put in one bag – remember it's a treat.

- Send water (in reusable aluminum bottles since bottled water costs more and creates plastic waste) or milk as a drink, not juice boxes or soda. Children consume too much sugar and the best way to rehydrate the body is with water. Milk provides the needed calcium for growing bones. Save the juice and soda for a treat.
- Buy reusable lunch and sandwich bags to keep waste out of landfills. (A great website with all kinds of reusable bags is http://www.ecobags.com/Our_Products)

Go to our website for some easy recipes to make homemade baby food.

The rate of childhood obesity has doubled from 15% in 1971 to 30% in 2000 and has continued to rise. Lack of nutrition and lack of outdoor exercise both play a part in this. There has also been a dramatic rise in the amount of children with chronic health problems: diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol. One way to ensure that your children eat properly and get enough exercise is to do so yourself. Parents who model healthy behaviors teach their children the importance of both.

In response to the rise in childhood obesity, Kalamazoo Nature Center (with a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation) launched a new initiative in 2008 called No Child Left Inside (NCLI), which helps to reconnect children with nature. We encourage you to look into this and other programs that promote spending more time outdoors and reconnecting with nature. We are the stewards of the earth, and we need to help our children connect to nature for their mental, spiritual and physical health (now and in the future).

Here are some ideas for activities that help your kids connect things they enjoy seeing, smelling or eating with their origins and the cycle of life:

- Parks – Play, then spread out a picnic. Talk about how and where the things you are eating come from.
- Pack some nuts and talk about how squirrels bury them to eat all winter long.
- Community garden visit – show kids how green beans grow, then go home and eat some.
- Apple orchards – wander through and pick some apples then go home and make apple crisp or applesauce.
- Back yard scavenger hunt – Give your children a list of things to find in the backyard (stick, leaf, grass, insects) then talk about what they've found.
- Leaf collecting – identify the trees or just count how many colors you find.
- Bug collecting - just put them into a jar and poke holes in the top, then let them go at the end of the day. Talk about the cycle of nature such as how spiders help by eating mosquitoes etc.

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a form for a **free subscription** to American Baby Magazine. We find a lot of interesting information in this magazine and thought you might like it as well.

Websites with good information:

Promoting health and wellness of families – www.childrenandnature.org

Simple Homemade Baby Food - <http://www.parents.com/baby/feeding/solid-foods/simple-homemade-baby-food/>

USDA Food Pyramid Website - <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>