

Selecting, Serving, and Storing Commercially Prepared Baby Foods

This is a basic review of what new parents should know about using baby food.

When selecting commercial baby food:

- *Do not buy sticky or stained jars or containers.*
Sticky or stained jars of baby food may be cracked, which exposes the food to bacteria, or they may have glass particles on them from being packed with other cracked jars.
- *Throw away jars with chipped glass or rusty lids.*
- *Wash or wipe off the jar or container before opening.*
- *Follow "Use By" dates for buying and storing unopened baby food.*
If the Use By date has passed, throw away the food.
- *Check the container's vacuum seal.*
Baby food jars have a button or depressed area on the lid that indicates if the vacuum seal has been broken. Do not buy or use any jar of baby food if the vacuum seal has been broken (the button is popped out).

When serving and storing commercial baby food:

- *Always start by washing hands!*
- *Check the container's vacuum seal.*
A popping or "whoosh" sound should be heard when the jar is opened and the vacuum seal is broken. If a jar is difficult to open, run it under warm water for a few minutes. Do not tap the lid with a utensil or bang it on a hard surface; this could chip glass into the food. If a grating sound is heard when opening the jar, check if there are any glass particles under the lid. Also, always check the food for any strange particles (glass, etc.).
- *Serve food from a bowl.*
Avoid feeding baby directly from the container. Babies usually don't finish a whole jar of food in one feeding. If a spoon used for feeding is put back into the jar, bacteria from the baby's mouth can enter the food and spoil it. Instead, take out small amounts of food from the jar with a clean spoon, and put it into a bowl for serving.
- *Throw away leftover food.*
Always throw away any leftover food from a bowl used to feed a baby; do not put it back into the container.
- *Immediately store an open jar of unused food, and then use it quickly.*
After a jar of baby food is opened, immediately store it in a refrigerator and use the food within 48 hours. The exceptions are baby food meats and egg yolks, which should be used within 24 hours. If not used within these time limits, throw away the food.
- *Do not microwave containers of baby food.*
Although some baby food containers say that they can be heated in a microwave, it is not recommended. This is because the food may heat unevenly and some parts of the food may burn baby's mouth. Instead, remove food from the jar, and warm on a stove, in a food warmer, or a microwave. Then stir the food and test the temperature before feeding. If heated in a microwave, let the food sit a few minutes, then stir well and check the temperature.