

## What are heavy metals?

Heavy metals refers to the elements arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury. Exposure may come from foods or other sources and can have negative health effects.



### Heavy metals can come from a variety of sources:

- ✓ **Arsenic:** Soil and water
- ✓ **Cadmium:** Soil and water
- ✓ **Lead:** Soil, air and water
- ✓ **Mercury:** Water

Heavy metals are found in **soil, water & air**



### Tips for making baby food at home:

- ✓ **Wash** fruits and vegetables to remove any dirt or dust
- ✓ **Remove** the outer peel where heavy metals may concentrate
- ✓ **Cook** rice in extra water then drain (like pasta!)



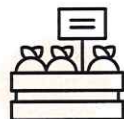
**Whether homemade or store-bought,** vary the types of fruits, vegetables and grains

Exposure to heavy metals is concerning for pregnant women & young children as higher levels may **impact neurological development**



### Crops grown in the ground or with excess water

can be more likely to take up heavy metals; certain fruits, vegetables & grains absorb these elements as they grow



Buying organic, locally grown and/or farmer's market foods **does not change** whether the foods contain heavy metals

### Foods prone to higher heavy metal levels:

- ✓ **Grains:** Accumulate heavy metal in the outer bran layer, so whole grains may have more than refined grains
- ✓ **Rice:** Takes up **arsenic** from being grown in flooded fields
- ✓ **Leafy vegetables:** Absorb **cadmium** from soil and water
- ✓ **Root vegetables:** Like carrots & sweet potatoes, absorb **lead** from soil
- ✓ **Fatty fish:** Like salmon, tuna, & mackerel, absorb **mercury** from water in their fatty tissue



**BabyMatters**  
by Gerber Medical Hub

## Feeding Babies & Young Children Understanding Heavy Metals



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Breastmilk is the ideal nutritional start for an infant. Complementary foods should always be prepared, used, and stored as instructed on the label.

For more information: <https://www.fda.gov/food/metals-and-your-food/closer-zero-action-plan-baby-foods>

## Do homemade foods have less heavy metals?

While both are safe and nutritious, a recent report shows that homemade baby foods are **not** lower in heavy metals than store-bought baby foods.



### Don't skip iron-fortified baby cereal, an important source of iron & zinc!

Iron helps **support** healthy brain development  
Adequate iron status can help **protect** against absorbing heavy metals from food

### Experts recommend:

- ✓ **Feeding a variety** of nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- ✓ **Including infant cereals**, an important source of iron and zinc, made from a variety of grains
- ✓ **Choosing fish** known to be lower in mercury



**A well-nourished child is better protected** from absorbing the heavy metals

### Tips for reducing the risk of heavy metals when feeding children:

- ✓ Make sure water supply has been checked for lead
- ✓ Wash hands and foods to remove residual lead from dirt and dust
- ✓ Include foods rich in iron and zinc, especially when breastfeeding or mixed feeding
- ✓ Choose snacks made with a variety of grains, not just rice



## How do heavy metals get in foods?

Heavy metals are found in the environment, including the soil and water, and certain crops and animals absorb these elements as they grow.

## Can the risk of heavy metals in foods be reduced?

Dietary variety is the best way to ensure a child gets adequate nutrition and can help minimize exposure to any one heavy metal.