

SAFETY

Foods to Avoid for Babies Under 12 Months: Complete List

Some foods are dangerous for babies under 12 months. See our complete list of foods to avoid (honey, whole nuts, raw vegetables, and more) with the reasons why and safe alternatives.

Key Takeaways

- Before 12 months, avoid honey (infant-botulism risk) and cow's milk as a main drink; small amounts of dairy in cooking are fine.
- Skip added salt and sugar - a baby's kidneys cannot handle much salt and sugar offers no benefit.
- Avoid choking-hazard foods: whole nuts, whole grapes, popcorn, hard raw fruit and vegetables, and large or sticky pieces.
- Steer clear of unpasteurised products and high-mercury fish; choose lower-mercury options like salmon.
- Most restrictions ease around the first birthday, but choking precautions and supervision continue for years.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why can't babies under 1 have honey?

Honey can contain spores of *Clostridium botulinum*, which can grow in a baby's immature gut and cause infant botulism, a serious illness. This applies to raw, pasteurised, and cooked honey, so avoid it entirely until after the first birthday.

Can babies have cow's milk before 12 months?

Small amounts of whole cow's milk used in cooking, such as in mashed potato or a sauce, are fine from around 6 months. What to avoid is cow's milk as your baby's main drink before 12 months, because it does not provide enough iron and can displace breast milk or formula.

Is added salt really a problem for babies?

Yes. A baby's kidneys cannot handle much sodium. Babies under 12 months should have less than 1 gram of salt (about 0.4 g sodium) per day, so avoid adding salt and limit salty processed foods.

Which fish should babies avoid?

Avoid high-mercury fish such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel, marlin, and bigeye tuna. Lower-mercury options like salmon and light tinned tuna in moderation are generally fine, check current local advice with your pediatrician.

Are rice drinks safe for babies?

No. Rice drinks should not be given to children under 5 as a main milk substitute because of arsenic levels. Always speak to your pediatrician about appropriate milk alternatives.

What about whole grapes and nuts?

Whole grapes, whole nuts, popcorn, and other round or hard foods are choking hazards. Quarter grapes lengthwise and offer nuts as smooth nut butter thinned with water or milk rather than whole.

Sources

1. Foods and Drinks to Avoid or Limit — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Choking Hazards — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3. Your baby's first solid foods — NHS