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The consumer standard for food and consumer product quality and safety.

## What to Know About Heavy Metals in Baby Food



[cleanlabelproject.org](https://cleanlabelproject.org)

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Inside!**

## It's important to know the facts about heavy metals in baby food.

The first 1,000 days of life are an extraordinary time of brain and immune system development, and what a baby eats directly affects this growth.<sup>1</sup> Caregivers need to be aware of the potential risks of heavy metals so they can implement strategies to minimize exposure, while making sure their child receives the necessary nutrition for healthy development.



## Heavy metals, good and bad, are found naturally in soil.

Soil is full of naturally-occurring elements that find their way into fruits, vegetables, and other ingredients used in baby food. Some elements, like iron, are good for health, especially during pregnancy and the first years of life. Others, like arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury, can be harmful at high levels.<sup>2</sup>

## High levels of heavy metal exposure can affect brain development.

Long-term exposure to high levels of heavy metals can impact brain development and disrupt other bodily functions, but occasional low-level exposure is generally not harmful.<sup>3</sup> A product featuring the Clean Label Project certification logo demonstrates the brand's commitment to sourcing ingredients and formulating with stringent measures to minimize harmful heavy metals and other contaminants.<sup>4</sup>

## Offering a variety of nutrient-dense foods can keep growing children healthier.

Offering a diverse range of foods such as fruits and vegetables of different color, texture, and preparation, can reduce potential for exposure to heavy metals from any one source. Feeding nutrient dense options, or foods high in vitamins and minerals and low in added sugars, not only ensures your baby is getting what they need to grow, but can also help minimize the absorption of harmful heavy metals. For example, foods rich in iron and calcium can help reduce absorption of harmful heavy metals.<sup>5</sup>

## Whether homemade or store-bought, make sure baby's food is nutrient dense.

The issue of heavy metals is applicable to all foods, homemade or store-bought, because heavy metals are naturally present in soil and water. No matter what path you choose, it is important to make every bite count by choosing nutrient-dense options.

## What's changed, why am I hearing about heavy metals in baby food now?

You may be hearing more about heavy metals in baby food because a recently passed law requires all baby food manufacturers to test their products for heavy metals and share the results online beginning January 1, 2025.<sup>6</sup>



## Where can I go for more information?

Speak with your health care provider to make sure your child is getting all the nutrients they need to grow and thrive. Government websites such as those cited in this pamphlet and trusted nonprofit organizations like Clean Label Project are also great places to learn more. [www.cleanlabelproject.org](http://www.cleanlabelproject.org)

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PROJECT®

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2. Environmental Contaminants in Food <https://www.fda.gov/food/chemical-contaminants-pesticides/environmental-contaminants-food> . Accessed July 21, 2024.

3. About Lead and Other Heavy Metals and Reproductive Health <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/reproductive-health/prevention/lead-metals.html>. Accessed July 21, 2024

4. Clean Label Project. [www.cleanlabelproject.org](http://www.cleanlabelproject.org) . Accessed November 8, 2024.

5. Help Protect Children from Environmental Contaminants: Healthy Food Choices for Your Baby Aged 6-12 Months. United States Food and Drug Administration. Accessed July 21, 2024 <https://www.fda.gov/food/environmental-contaminants-food/help-protect-children-environmental-contaminants-healthy-food-choices-your-baby-aged-6-12-months> . Accessed July 21, 2024

6. California Legislative Information. AB-899 Food safety: baby food [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=202320240AB899](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB899) . Accessed July 21, 2024.