



Seniors and Food Safety: When Grandparents Take Care of Grandchildren

Food Safety and Young Children

You've probably seen the T-shirts that read: "If I'd known how much fun it is to have grandchildren, I would have had them first."

Well, having your grandchildren come to visit or regularly lending a hand with their care is fun. But as you know, the care and feeding of grandchildren also is a major responsibility.

Many of the feeding practices you used with your own children may no longer be advocated for today's infants and toddlers. Let's take a look at the food safety implications of feeding a special new person in your life.



The Latest, Safest Information on Feeding Infants and Young Children

Keep it clean. Wash your hands before making formula and before food preparation. According to a Penn State University study of mothers with infants less than 4 months old:

- 32 percent said they don't wash their hands after changing their babies' diapers
- 15 percent said they don't wash their hands after they go to the bathroom
- 10 percent don't wash their hands after handling raw meat
- 41 percent don't wash their hands after petting animals
- 5 percent didn't wash their hands after gardening or working with soil

Did you know that not washing hands could result in infant diarrhea because bacteria can grow:

- on diapers
- in feces and urine
- in raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs
- on animals such as dogs, cats, turtles, snakes and birds
- in soil and water

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Handling Baby's Food Safely

Harmful bacteria from a baby's mouth can be introduced into food or bottles, where they can grow and multiply even after refrigeration and reheating. If the baby does not finish a bottle, do not save it for another time.

Likewise, do not feed a baby from a jar of baby food and put it back in the refrigerator for another time. Saliva on the spoon contaminates the remaining food.

Perishable items such as milk, formula or food left out of the refrigerator or without a cold source for more than two hours should not be used.

When traveling with a baby:

- Transport bottles and food in an insulated cooler.
- Place the ice chest in the passenger compartment of the car. It's cooler than in the trunk.
- Use frozen gel packs to keep food or bottles cold on long outings.
- Do not keep bottles or food in the same bag with dirty diapers.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for preparing bottles before filling with formula or milk.



Observe “use by” dates on formula cans. See the baby food safe storage chart for detailed information. Do not feed a baby anything kept longer than indicated on the chart.

Those interested in health foods may consider using honey as a sweetener to entice babies to drink water from a bottle. Honey is not safe for children less than a year old. It can contain the botulinum organism that could cause illness or death. Raw or unpasteurized milk should not be served to infants and children.

If making homemade baby food, use a brush to clean areas around the blender blades or food processor parts. Old food particles can harbor harmful bacteria that may contaminate other foods.

Use detergent and hot water to wash and rinse all utensils (including the can opener) that come in contact with baby foods. If using commercial baby foods, check whether the safety button on the lid is down. If the jar lid doesn't “pop” when opened, do not use it. Discard jars with chipped glass or rusty lids.

To freeze homemade baby food, put the mixture in an ice cube tray. Cover with heavy-duty plastic wrap until the food is frozen. Then pop the food cubes into a freezer bag or airtight container and date it. Store up to three months. One cube equals one serving.

Small jars also can be used for freezing. Leave about ½ inch of space at the top because food expands when frozen.

Safe Storage of Baby Food

NOTE: Don't leave baby food solids or liquids out at room temperature for more than two hours.

Liquids

	Refrigerator	Freezer
Expressed breast milk	5 days	3 to 4 months
Formula	2 days	not recommended
Whole milk	5 days	3 months
Reconstituted evaporated milk	3 to 5 days	not recommended

Special Handling

1. For shelf storage of unopened cans of formula, observe "use by" dates printed on containers. Store evaporated milk up to 12 months.
2. Heat liquid in disposable bottles in hot tap water, not in the microwave.
3. Shake bottle before testing the temperature on top of your hand.

Discard any unused milk left in a bottle.

Solids — opened or freshly made

	Refrigerator	Freezer
Strained fruits and vegetables	2 to 3 days	6 to 8 months
Strained meats and eggs	1 day	1 to 2 months
Meat/vegetable combinations	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
Homemade baby foods	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months

Special Handling

1. Observe "use by" date for shelf storage of unopened jars.
2. Check whether the safety button in the lid is down. If the jar lid does not "pop" when opened or is not sealed safely, do not use.
3. Do not heat meats, meat sticks, eggs or jars of food in the microwave.
4. Transfer food from jars to bowls or heating dish. For 4 ounces of food, microwave on high 15 seconds; stir and let stand 30 seconds.
5. Stir and test the temperature of the foods before feeding the baby.
6. Don't feed a baby from the jar.

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For more information about food safety, visit the
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