



Growing Healthy Bodies and Minds

Keeping Your Family Safe from Heavy Metals

What are heavy metals?

Metals are found naturally in our air, water and soil. Plants absorb these metals as they grow, so they are in some of the foods that we eat.

Our bodies need some metals, like zinc and iron, to be healthy. But other metals, like arsenic and lead, can be harmful if we eat too much of them. In children, exposure to higher levels of heavy metals may affect brain development and impact learning or behavior.

Because some foods end up with more heavy metals than others, it is important to eat a variety of foods.



Protect your child by offering a variety of foods.

You can lower your child's exposure to heavy metals by feeding them a wide range of foods.

- **Change up your fruits and vegetables.** It is important for growing children to try different kinds of fruits and vegetables to give them all the vitamins and minerals they need. Wash fruits and vegetables in cold water before preparing and serving.
- **Switch up your grains.** Offer a variety of cereal and grain options, like multigrain, oatmeal, quinoa, whole wheat and rice. Choosing rice less often will help limit exposure to arsenic, a heavy metal found in rice.
- **Choose water and limit juice.** For children over the age of 1, limit juice to less than 4 oz. a day and offer a variety of 100% fruit juices.
- **Provide whole food snacks.** Try less processed snacks like bananas, beans, cheese, and yogurt, instead of rice-based snacks and teething foods.

First Foods

Infant cereal is **easy to digest** and is a good source of **iron**, which all babies need. But first foods can also be infant meats, fruits and vegetables!



WIC provides a variety of infant cereal options

Use your WIC benefits to try **oat, whole wheat, quinoa, and multigrain** infant cereals!

Other things you can do to limit exposure to heavy metals include:

Prepare regular rice

by rinsing and draining it first and cooking it in extra water that can be drained like pasta. This will help reduce heavy metals in the rice.



Breastfeed if possible.
Breastfeeding can help reduce exposure to heavy metals.



Eat foods that are rich in vitamin C, iron, and calcium.
These vitamins and minerals can help reduce the effects of heavy metals in our bodies.

Foods high in iron:

Fortified cereals, breads, pastas
Red meat
Beans
Peas
Green leafy vegetables

Foods high in vitamin C:

Citrus fruits
Bell peppers
Tomatoes
Strawberries

Foods high in calcium:

Milk
Yogurt
Cheese
Fortified cereals

Buy good foods with WIC!



Eating a wide variety of foods can help reduce exposure to heavy metals. WIC offers many options, including fresh, frozen, canned, and infant fruits and vegetables and a variety of cereal and whole grain choices!

Talk with your WIC nutritionist or your child's health care provider about steps you can take to make sure your child gets all the nutrition they need, safely.

For more information about heavy metals in baby food, visit the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#).

1-800-WIC-1007



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