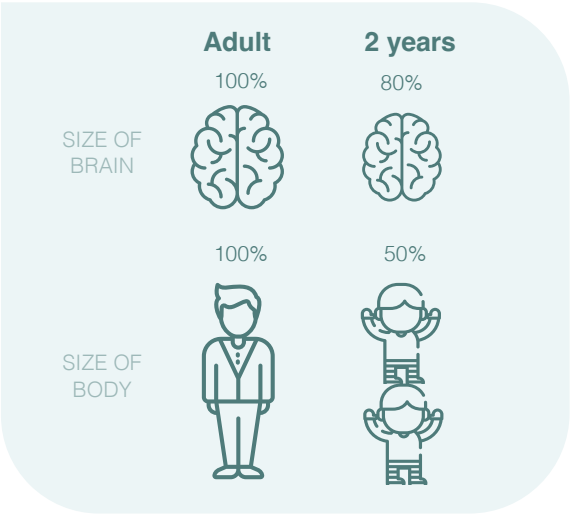
BABY FOODS

Ensuring the Highest Safety Standards



Why Do Babies Need Safe Foods?

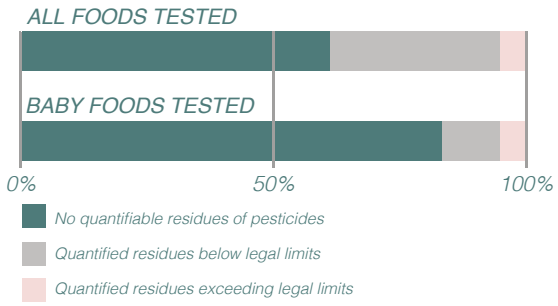
The first years of life are important for laying the foundation of health. Children grow a lot during this time: **by the age of 2, a child reaches half of its adult height**, and its **brain reaches 80% of its adult size**. During these first years, their organs are still developing, and they have a higher food intake per body weight than adults and older children. This makes them **more vulnerable to various food contaminants.**

What Are Food Contaminants?

Contaminants are substances that have not been intentionally added to food but may be present in food from the environment or from its production, packaging, transport and storage. To protect consumers against exposure to food contaminants, **stricter maximum levels are set for babyfoods** than the ones set for the general population. To comply with these strict maximum levels, baby food manufacturers must **carefully select their raw ingredients** and carry out **strict controls**.

80% of Baby Foods Without Pesticides Residues

Commercial baby foods **cannot contain more than 0.01 mg of pesticide residues per kilogram**, except for a given number of substances which are set much lower[1]. This is an extremely low level compared to the maximum levels applying to some general foods. As a result, commercial baby foods **contain fewer pesticide residues** than general foods.



For example, maximum residue level of:

Pyrimethanil in apple
0.01 mg/kg for baby foods
15 mg/kg for general foods

Chlormequat in oat
0.01 mg/kg for baby foods
15 mg/kg for general foods

Cadusafos in rice
0.006 mg/kg for baby foods
0.01 mg/kg for general foods

In 2022, 110 829 samples of foods were analysed by Member State authorities to check their compliance with the maximum residue levels of pesticides set by EU legislation. 1783 samples were baby foods.

80.8% of baby food products had no quantifiable residue of pesticides, compared with 59% for all samples[2].

**For the purposes of this document, the term 'Baby foods' encompasses processed cereal-based foods and other baby foods for infants and young children from 4-6 months to 36 months, as defined in Directive 2006/125/EC.*

SNE Specialised Nutrition Europe

Strict Maximum Levels for Environmental And Process Contaminants

Environmental contaminants like toxins and heavy metals can occur in food naturally, while process contaminants can appear during the manufacturing process. To avoid any risks for consumers, **the EU has adopted strict maximum levels for many contaminants**[3]. The levels applying to commercial baby foods are particularly low and have consequences in terms of agricultural practices, sourcing of ingredients and manufacturing processes.

LEAD

10 times stricter limit for baby foods
0.020 mg/kg for baby foods
0.20 mg/kg for general cereals and pulses

NITRATE

10 to 20 times stricter limit for baby foods
200 mg/kg for baby foods
2000 mg/kg for general preserved spinach
3500 mg/kg for fresh spinach

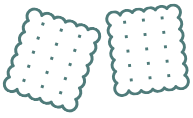
PATULIN

5 to 12.5 times stricter limit for baby foods
10 µg/kg for baby foods
50 µg/kg for general fruit juice

Less Acrylamide in Baby Foods

Acrylamide forms when certain foods, such as wheat and starchy vegetables, are cooked at high temperatures. In 2015, the European Food Safety Authority confirmed its carcinogenic potential[4]*. The EU introduced mitigation measures in 2017, setting lower benchmark levels for baby foods (e.g. 150 µg/kg for baby biscuits vs. 350 µg/kg for general biscuits*[5]*). The baby food industry continues efforts to further reduce acrylamide, and care is also needed in home cooking.*

GENERAL BISCUITS



Benchmark level of acrylamide 350 µg/kg

BABY BISCUITS

Benchmark level of acrylamide 150 µg/kg

Strict Rules for Food Contact Materials

Food packaging contains substances that can end up in the food. To protect babies, **packacking must be designed to limit such 'migration' to 60 mg per kilogram**, and even lower for some substances like plasticisers, varnishes and coatings[6]. For example, the use of bisphenol A and phatalates, which can be found in plastic packaging is not permitted baby food packaging.

Adapted Texture for Safer Food Consumption

Choking risks exist for all ages, but infants and children aged under 4 are especially vulnerable as they develop their eating skills. Babies gradually **progress from liquids to purees and solid foods**, requiring textures that match their motor development. Baby foods are therefore **designed to suit infants' evolving oral and motor abilities**. For example, baby biscuits are sized and textured to dissolve easily. Clear age labelling helps parents choose appropriate products for each stage.

Strictly Evaluated Food Additives

Before authorisation, food additives undergo a very **thorough and strict evaluation process** by the European Food Safety Authority in order to confirm their safety for the intended population and use. As a result, much fewer additives are approved for baby foods than for most general foods[7].

Babies need more than a balanced diet to be healthy: they also need **food which is specifically manufactured to take into account their vulnerability**. The EU has adopted specific rules to strictly limit undesirable substances in baby foods, resulting in **commercial baby foods being among the safest foods on the market**. Food safety is of paramount importance for baby food manufacturers.

Compliance with these strict rules is ensured through **strict controls of ingredients, manufacturing processes and packaging design.** Being a leader in food research and innovation enables the baby food industry to provide the safest possible food.

Baby food manufacturers currently offer a **wide range of different baby food products**. This variety of products should be retained so that parents and caregivers can have the **safest food options available for their babies**.

SNE Specialised Nutrition Europe
Avenue des Nerviens 9-31, 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 508 10 74 s@specialisednutritioneurope.eu
www.specialisednutritioneurope.eu

REFERENCES

[1] Commission Directive 2006/125/EC of 5 December 2006 on processed cereal-based foods and baby foods for infants and young children.

[2] EFSA (European Food Safety Authority), Carrasco Cabrera, L., Di Piazza, G., Dujardin, B., Marchese, E., & Medina Pastor, P. (2024); The 2022 European Union report on pesticide residues in food. EFSA Journal, 22(4), e8753. https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8753.

[3] Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915 of 25 April 2023 on maximum levels for certain contaminants in food and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006.

[4] EFSA CONTAM Panel (EFSA Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain), 2015. Scientific Opinion on acrylamide in food. EFSA Journal 2015;13(6):4104, 321 pp. doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2015.4104; EFSA CONTAM Panel, 2022. Assessment of the genotoxicity of acrylamide. EFSA Journal 2022; 20(5):7293, 45 pp.

[5] Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/2158 of 20 November 2017 establishing mitigation measures and benchmark levels for the reduction of the presence of acrylamide in food .

[6] Commission Regulation (EU) No 10/2011 of 14 January 2011 on plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with food.

[7] Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on food additives.