

## THE SPOT INFANT PARENTS: INFO. ON YOGURT

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### “When can my baby eat yogurt?”-

[The BabyCenter Editorial Team](#)

Most babies can start eating yogurt as soon as they start eating solids – around 4 to 6 months. Yogurt is an excellent choice for one of your [baby's early foods](#) because it contains such nutrients as calcium, protein, and vitamins. The best option is plain, unsweetened, pasteurized yogurt (regular or Greek) made from whole milk and containing "live cultures."

#### **Why plain, unsweetened yogurt made from whole milk?**

Nearly all flavored and fruit-on-top yogurts, even products marketed for babies, contain added sugar, which can contribute to tooth decay and obesity. Choosing plain yogurt is the easiest way to avoid added sugar.

How can you tell if a product has added sugar? Checking the amount of sugar in the nutrition information on the label won't necessarily help because all yogurt contains some natural sugar in the form of lactose.

Instead, you'll need to check the list of ingredients for the word "sugar" or any of these other names for added sugar: cane crystals, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, evaporated cane juice, fruit juice concentrates, honey, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, and sucrose.

Also, babies need the calories and fat in dairy products made from whole milk. Don't offer your child reduced-fat or fat-free yogurt before age 2 unless his doctor advises it.

#### **What can I add to make plain yogurt taste better?**

You can add flavor (and nutrients) to your baby's plain yogurt by mixing in fruit or vegetables. For babies who are new to solids, start with pureed fruit and cooked, pureed vegetables. For older babies, you can add soft fruit and cooked vegetables chopped into small pieces. Mashed avocado, applesauce, oatmeal, and wheat germ are also good additions.

**Note:** Never give honey to a baby younger than 12 months because it may contain [bacteria that can cause botulism](#) in children that age.

#### **What are live cultures, and why might they be good for my baby?**

Some types of yogurt contain live cultures, also known as probiotics. These are living microorganisms (bacteria) used to convert milk to yogurt, or added to yogurt afterward. They promote the growth of healthy bacteria in the gut, which researchers believe may help with digestion. How can you tell whether yogurt has this good bacteria? The product label should state that the yogurt contains live or active cultures, which means the organisms have not been destroyed by heat during processing. However, a label that says "made with active cultures" does *not* mean that the yogurt still contains living cultures, only that the yogurt was made with them (as all yogurt is).

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It can be hard to tell if a yogurt contains a significant amount of beneficial bacteria. One way is to look for the [Live & Active Cultures logo](#), created by the National Yogurt Association. This logo identifies products that contain at least 100 million live and active cultures per gram. But participation in the program is voluntary, so a product without the logo isn't necessarily short on cultures.

## **What if my child has a milk allergy or is lactose intolerant?**

If your baby has been diagnosed with a milk allergy or shows signs of a [food allergy](#) (such as [eczema](#)), don't give him yogurt until you've checked with the doctor. Otherwise, as with any [new food](#), wait at least three days after introducing yogurt before giving your baby another new food. That way, if your baby has an allergic reaction, it will be easier to tell what caused it. Common symptoms of an allergic reaction include itchy red spots or patches, swelling around the lips or eyes, or vomiting within two hours of eating the recently introduced food. If you notice any of these symptoms, don't give your baby any more of the food until you've checked in with the doctor. [Lactose intolerance](#) is very rare in babies. Even if your child becomes lactose intolerant, it may be fine for him to eat yogurt. That's because the production process breaks down much of the lactose, making yogurt more easily tolerated than other dairy products.

## **Why is yogurt okay if cow's milk is not?**

You may wonder why it's okay for babies to eat yogurt, but drinking [cow's milk](#) isn't recommended until a baby is at least 12 months old. Actually, a little bit of cow's milk, like the amount in the occasional serving of yogurt, won't hurt your baby. It's just not a good replacement for the breast milk or formula that still makes up most of his diet for the first year. That's because babies can't digest cow's milk as easily or completely as breast milk or formula. And cow's milk doesn't have the ideal proportion of fats and nutrients that your baby gets from breast milk or formula.

Reviewed by the [BabyCenter Medical Advisory Board](#)  
Last updated: January 2017