



# How to Make every bite count!

A guide to nutritious family meals for babies and toddlers.



# Make every bite count with nutrient-rich foods

Your choice of foods and how you feed your baby and toddler have an important influence on their eating habits throughout life.

Family meals made from fresh, nutrient-rich foods make it easy to meet everyone's needs from one meal that all will enjoy.

## Which nutrients are important for growth and development?

The first two years of a baby's life is a time of rapid growth and development. Providing nutrient-rich foods will help meet requirements of essential nutrients at this important time.

### Iron and zinc

Iron and zinc are vital for healthy growth and brain development.

From around six months of age, your baby's iron and zinc stores can become depleted. At this stage, it is important to start introducing good sources of these nutrients such as iron-fortified rice cereal and red meat.

### Omega-3

To support your baby's brain and visual development, a regular intake of omega-3 fatty acids are required. Fish is the best source of omega-3, with red meat making the second largest contribution to intake in the Australian diet.

### Calcium

Calcium is important for strong bones and good teeth. Breast milk should be the main source of calcium in your baby's diet until at least one year of age. Commercial infant formula is a satisfactory substitute for infants who are not breastfed. Whole-milk products such as yoghurt and cheese can be introduced from six months of age. Full-cream cow's milk can be offered as a drink from 12 months of age.

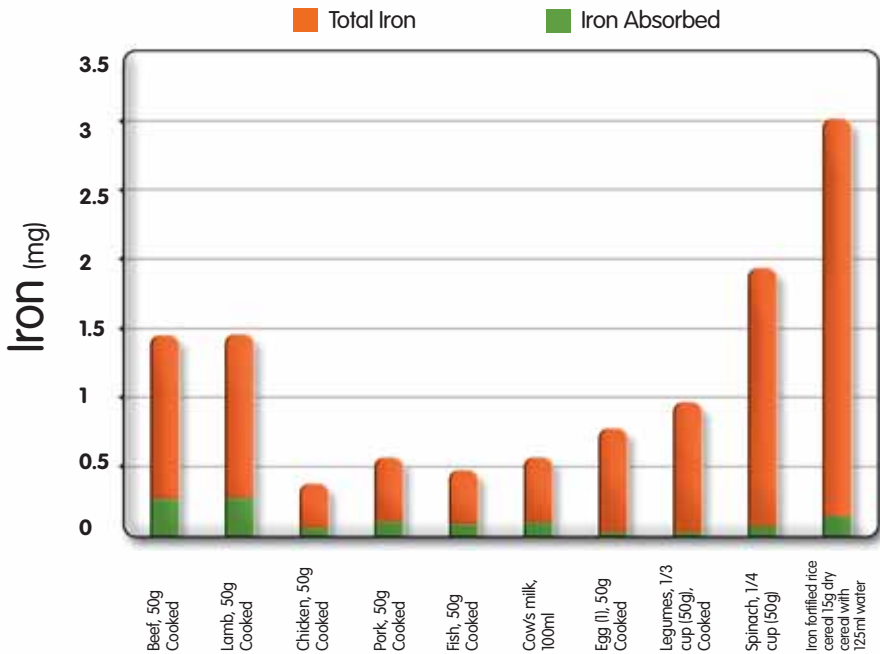
### Protein

Protein is required for growth and development and your baby requires more because they are growing so rapidly. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein. Some foods such as red meat contain all the amino acids which are essential for a healthy body.

# Good sources of Iron

- Red meat is high in iron and zinc which is well absorbed by the body.
- Haem iron (found only in meat, fish and poultry) is absorbed four times better than non-haem iron. This means more iron is absorbed from meat, fish or poultry than from plant foods (see graph).
- Red meat consumed three to four times per week makes it easier to meet dietary requirements.

## Iron In Food



## Meat-free diets

- Carefully choose suitable food alternatives that are high in iron and zinc.
- Combining plant food sources of iron with foods high in vitamin C helps to increase iron absorption.

# Your baby's journey from puree to family meals

## The “Silky, Smooth” stage

**Around 6-7 months of age**, red meat is suitable for babies. As soon as your baby has learnt to happily accept pureed or very finely mashed solid foods, red meat can become an important addition to the diet.

- For a smooth texture, meat must be tender and moist. Puree with boiled water or casserole juices. See silky steak and smooth stew recipes (page 6).
- Blend meat with a variety of different vegetables such as zucchini, pumpkin and sweet potato.
- If your baby rejects a new food, offer it again until the food becomes familiar and accepted.



## The “Lumpy, Mushy” stage

**Around 7-9 months of age**, it is important to encourage your baby to chew varying kinds of textures. This helps to develop muscles for chewing and speech.

- Progress the texture to include small, fork mashed soft lumps.
- Your baby is able to chew foods even without teeth.



## The Finger Food stage

**Around 9-12 months of age**, your baby's hand control improves. Encourage them to feed themselves. You can also offer some soft finger foods earlier if they are able to grasp foods.

- Cut food into small pieces which can easily be managed or held onto for chewing.
- Do not serve hard foods such as raw carrot, celery, apple or nuts as these may cause your baby to choke. Large round foods such as grapes and sausage can also pose a choking risk; however these can be simply cut in half or quarters.
- Never leave your baby alone while they are eating or let them wander as they eat.



## The Toddler stage

**Around 12 months of age**, your toddler will start exerting their independence. They can be picky about when and what foods they will eat. It is important you maintain control of the food on offer!

- Let your toddler choose what to eat from a limited choice of only nutritious foods.
- Avoid encouraging or rewarding them with less nutritious treats for finishing the plate.
- If your toddler does not eat as much as you think they should, do not offer favourite alternatives – even if they are nutritious eg cow's milk.
- Make water the only drink of choice at meal time as filling up on milk and juices can reduce appetite and displace good food sources of iron and zinc.



## How much food does my baby need?

- Children have a natural ability to adjust the amount they eat according to their needs and growth patterns. Every child is different; some days they will eat more than other days.
- Continue to consistently offer small portions of nutritious foods and trust your child to decide how much to eat at each meal and over the day.

# Cooking red meat for babies

When you first introduce red meat to your baby, use the following simple cooking methods to cook red meat. You might find it more practical to cook a batch of meat and freeze small portions.

## Recipes for smooth texture

### Silky steak for babies

100g rump steak\*, trimmed of fat

1 tsp olive oil

100g cooked pumpkin

1. Heat barbecue or non-stick frying pan. Rub meat with oil. Cook over medium-high heat for 3-4 mins on each side or until cooked. The meat should feel springy. Rest meat for 5 mins.
2. Slice meat and combine with cooked pumpkin and blend in a food processor or using stick blender until smooth.

Suggested vegetables to combine with meat puree: pumpkin, carrot, sweet potato or zucchini.



### Smooth stew

200g diced lamb\* or beef, trimmed of fat

1 tsp olive oil

1 carrot, peeled and chopped

1 stick celery, chopped

1 potato, peeled and chopped

1. Toss meat in oil. Heat small non-stick frying pan. Add meat and brown. Remove from pan and place in small saucepan.
2. Add carrot, celery and potato to saucepan and add 1 cup water (or enough to just cover contents). Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 1 ½ - 2 hours or until very tender.
3. Blend in food processor or using stick blender until smooth.

\* For more information on different beef and lamb cuts, visit [www.themainmeal.com.au](http://www.themainmeal.com.au)



# Storing red meat for babies

## Fridge

- Cover, cool and refrigerate cooked meat immediately.
- Keep no more than 2 days in small, airtight containers.

## Freezer

- Always add moisture to sliced, cooked meat when freezing eg boiled water, meat juices, mashed vegetables or casserole juices.
- Once food is cooked, freeze immediately in small portions in airtight containers. Use within 4 weeks.
- For small portions, freeze in ice cube trays and place in airtight freezer bags.
- Thaw cubes in refrigerator as required.
- Never refreeze meals that have been initially frozen then thawed.

## Reheating

- Reheat thawed or refrigerated meat meals in a small amount of water in a small pan or microwave proof dish in the microwave.
- Make sure the meat and juices boil for a few minutes to ensure the food is thoroughly heated through (heat to at least 70°C).
- Mix well and check temperature of the food before giving to your baby.

## Adapting the family meal

Once your baby is familiar with red meat, you can start preparing meals for your baby from the family meal.

The recipes in this brochure illustrate how to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. Adjust the ingredients and flavours to reflect your preferred cuisine and cultural background.

A baby's tastebuds are quite sensitive.

- Add more intense spices and herbs such as chilli to your meal once baby's portion has been served.
- Avoid using salt on your baby's food so they will learn to enjoy the natural flavours of the food.

## Grill

### Beef & vegetable skewers

**Serves:** 4

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 8 mins

#### Ingredients

500g beef rump, trimmed of fat, cut into 2cm pieces

2 zucchini, cut into 1cm slices

1 yellow capsicum, cut into 2cm pieces

16 cherry tomatoes

3 tsp olive oil

#### Serving suggestion

Barbecued pumpkin, vegetable couscous and lemon wedges.

#### Method

1. Toss beef and vegetables in oil. Thread onto 8 bamboo skewers (Cut off sharp ends with scissors after threading).
2. Heat a large non-stick frying pan or bbq. Cook skewers for 6-8 mins over medium heat, turning occasionally. Place skewers on a warm plate and loosely cover with foil. Rest the skewers for 5 mins.
3. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



## Silky Smooth

Blend 1 cube of beef (30g), 1 piece of zucchini (20g) and a slice of pumpkin (20g) with 1 tbsp of boiled water until smooth.



## Lumpy mushy

Pulse 2 (60g) cubes of beef in a blender with 1 tbsp of boiled water until partially smooth. With a fork mash 1 piece of zucchini (20g) and a slice of pumpkin (30g) into the meat puree.



## Finger Food

Remove the meat and vegetables from 1 skewer and cut into small pieces, chop 2 slices of pumpkin and place in shallow bowl.



## Toddlers

Remove meat and vegetables from the skewer. Add lettuce, carrot and cucumber ribbons and barbecued pumpkin.



## Roast

### Lamb & veggy roast with potato wedges

**Serves:** 4

Preparation time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 40 mins - 1 hour

#### Ingredients

500g lamb mini roast, trimmed of fat

2 tbsp olive oil

800g potatoes, peeled, cut into wedges

500g pumpkin, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces

250g cherry tomatoes

2 bunches asparagus, cut into bite size lengths

#### Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C. Rub lamb with 2 tsp of oil and brown in a non-stick frying pan over high heat. Place on baking tray lined with baking paper.
2. Toss potatoes and pumpkin in remaining oil and place on another baking tray lined with baking paper. Place wedges on one side and pumpkin on the other. Bake for 1 hour adding tomatoes and asparagus for the last 15 mins of cooking.
3. Meanwhile bake browned lamb for 20-25 mins. Remove from oven when cooked, while potatoes and vegetables finish cooking. Loosely cover lamb with foil and rest lamb for 10 mins before carving.
4. Carve lamb into thin slices. Serve with wedges and roasted vegetables.
5. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



## Silky Smooth

Blend small slice of lamb (25g), 1 potato wedge (25g) and 1 tbsp of roasted pumpkin (35g) for a smooth puree. Add 1 tbsp of boiled water if needed.



## Lumpy mushy

Pulse a slice of lamb in blender with 1 tbsp of boiled water until partially smooth. With a fork mash 1 potato wedge and 2 tbsp of roasted pumpkin. Combine with blended lamb.



## Finger Food

Cut a slice of lamb into thin strips. Cut 3 wedges and some vegetables into pieces for small fingers.



## Toddlers

Cut potato into mini wedges before baking. Cut lamb into strips and roll around asparagus tips and sliced pumpkin into wheels. Serve with halves of the roasted cherry tomatoes. (Remove skin if preferred).



## Casserole

### Beef Casserole and dumplings

**Serves: 4**

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 1 hour 40 mins

#### Ingredients

800g beef rump or chuck steak, trimmed of fat, cut into 3cm cubes

2 tbsp olive oil

1 onion, roughly chopped

2 carrots, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces

2 tbsp plain flour

400g canned diced tomatoes, no added salt

2 large potatoes, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces

1 cup self-raising flour

30g of margarine

1 medium zucchini, grated and excess water squeezed out

1/3 cup reduced fat milk

#### Method

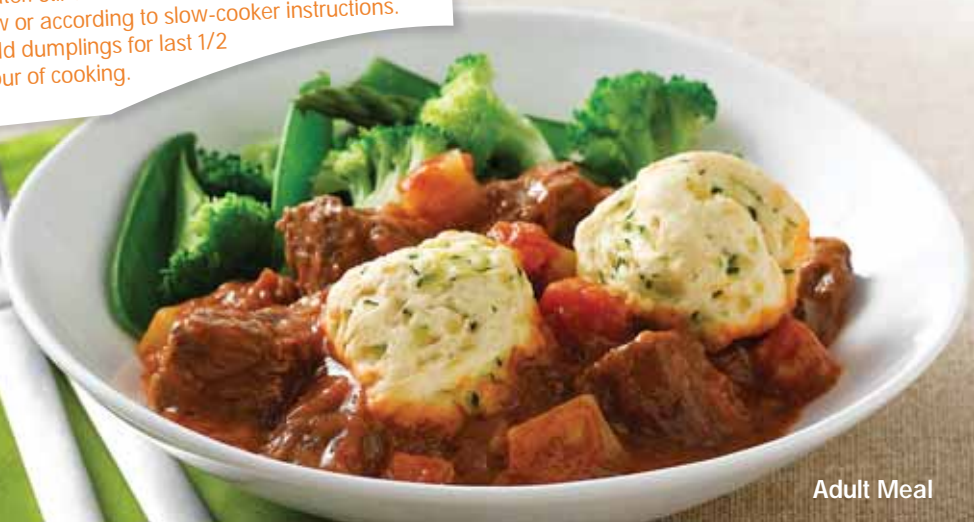
1. Heat large saucepan and add half oil. Add onion and carrot. Cook for 5 mins or until soft.
2. Meanwhile, heat non-stick frying pan. Toss beef with remaining oil and cook in batches over high heat until browned. As each batch is browned add to saucepan with onion mixture.
3. Add 2 tbsp plain flour, tomatoes, 1/2 cup of water and potatoes. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 1 1/2 hours.
4. For dumplings: Sift 1 cup self-raising flour into bowl and rub in margarine until mixture is crumbly. Stir in the zucchini. Add milk and mix to soft dough. Knead gently. Divide into 12 portions and form into rough balls. Place dumplings on top of casserole for the final 15 mins of cooking. Cover and cook for 15 mins or until risen and cooked.
5. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on following page.

#### Serving suggestion

Steamed green vegetables.

#### To cook in slow cooker

Brown meat and soften onion and carrot in oil in non-stick frying pan. Add to slow cooker along with potatoes, flour, tomatoes and 1/2 cup water. Stir to combine. Cook for 6-7 hours on low or according to slow-cooker instructions. Add dumplings for last 1/2 hour of cooking.



## Silky Smooth

Blend 1/4 cup of casserole with juices and 1/4 dumpling until smooth.



## Lumpy mushy

Pulse 1/3 cup casserole with juices and 1/4 of a dumpling in blender until partially smooth or mash with a fork for older infants.



## Finger Food

When preparing the dumplings make some mini ones using 2 tsp of mixture. Put 1/2 cup of casserole in a small bowl. Surround with cut up steamed vegetables.



## Toddlers

Spoon 3/4 cup of casserole into a small bowl. When preparing dumplings, make some mini ones using 2 tsp of mixture. Encourage your toddler to eat with a fork. Serve with steamed green vegetables.



## Mince

### Beef & sweet potato burgers

**Serves:** 4

Preparation time: 10 mins

Cooking time: 20 mins

#### Ingredients

350g orange sweet potato, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces

1 garlic clove, crushed

400g lean beef mince

2 tsp chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 zucchini, grated and excess water squeezed out

1 egg lightly beaten

2 tbsp olive oil

4 mixed grain rolls

1 avocado, sliced

#### Serving suggestion

Sliced tomato, lettuce leaves and sliced red onion.

#### Method

1. Steam or boil sweet potato until tender. Mash. Combine with garlic, beef mince, parsley, zucchini and egg. Form into 4 patties.
2. Heat large non-stick frying pan. Add oil and heat. Cook patties over medium heat for 4-5 mins on each side or until cooked. Keep warm.
3. Halve the rolls and toast. Top one half with lettuce, burgers, onion and tomato. Top other half with sliced avocado.
4. Use cooked ingredients to adapt the family meal for different developmental stages. See examples on the following page.



## Silky Smooth

Blend 1/2 patty with 1 tbsp boiled water until smooth. Serve with 2 tbsp of mashed avocado.



## Lumpy mushy

Fork mash 1 patty and 2 tbsp of mashed avocado.



## Finger Food

Make 2-3 mini burger patties for little fingers to pick up. Serve with 1 tbsp of grated carrot, 2 quartered cherry tomatoes and 2 cucumber slices. Spread 4 baby squares of bread with a tbsp mashed avocado.



## Toddlers

Make 3-4 mini burger patties. Place on top of toasted rounds or squares of sliced bread, topped with a slice of baby tomato. Top 3 toasted rounds of bread with sliced avocado. Serve with cooked carrot sticks.



# How to Make every bite count!

This information has been independently reviewed by the Dietitians Association of Australia.  
Background information is available at [www.themainmeal.com.au](http://www.themainmeal.com.au)



Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) represents the beef, sheep meat and goat meat producers of Australia. MLA has a commitment to providing health professionals and all Australians with accurate nutrition information about the role of red meat as part of a healthy balanced diet. Locked Bag 991 North Sydney NSW 2059. [www.themainmeal.com.au](http://www.themainmeal.com.au).

Red meat trimmed of visible fat has less than 4% saturated fat and earns the Heart Foundation Tick of Approval. For more information on the Tick program, visit [www.heartfoundation.org.au/tick](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/tick). CERT TM used under licence.

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These are guidelines only and are not intended as medical or nutritional advice. If you have specific health or dietary concerns, discuss them with your doctor or Accredited Practising Dietitian.

2nd edition, September 2011.