

What are heavy metals?

Heavy metals refers to the elements arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury. Exposure may come from foods or other sources.



Heavy metals can come from a variety of sources:

- ✓ **Arsenic:** Soil and water
- ✓ **Cadmium:** Soil and water
- ✓ **Lead:** Soil, air and water
- ✓ **Mercury:** Water

Heavy metals are found in **soil, water & air**



Exposure to heavy metals may have negative effects on neurological development during pregnancy through early childhood



Crops grown in the ground or with excess water

can be more likely to take up heavy metals; certain fruits, vegetables & grains absorb these elements as they grow



Buying organic, locally grown and/or farmer's market foods **does not change** whether the foods contain heavy metals



Foods prone to higher heavy metal levels:

- ✓ **Grains:** Accumulate heavy metal in the outer bran layer, so whole grains may have more than refined grains
- ✓ **Rice:** Takes up **arsenic** from being grown in flooded fields
- ✓ **Leafy vegetables:** Absorb **cadmium** from soil and water
- ✓ **Root vegetables:** Like carrots & sweet potatoes, absorb **lead** from soil
- ✓ **Fatty fish:** Like salmon, tuna, & mackerel, absorb **mercury** from water in their fatty tissue



How do heavy metals get in foods?

Heavy metals are found in the environment, including the soil and water, and certain crops and animals absorb these elements as they grow.

Do homemade foods have less heavy metals?

While both are safe and nutritious, a recent report shows that homemade baby foods are **not** lower in heavy metals than store-bought baby foods.



Tips for making baby food at home:

- ✓ **Wash** fruits and vegetables to remove any dirt or dust
- ✓ **Remove** the outer peel where heavy metals may concentrate
- ✓ **Cook** rice in extra water then drain (like pasta!)



Whether homemade or store-bought, vary the types of fruits, vegetables and grains

Understanding Heavy Metals



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Don't skip iron-fortified baby cereal, an important source of iron & zinc!

Iron helps **support** healthy brain development
Adequate iron status can help **protect** against absorbing heavy metals from food

Experts recommend:

- ✓ **Feeding a variety** of nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- ✓ **Including infant cereals,** an important source of iron and zinc, made from a variety of grains
- ✓ **Choosing fish** known to be lower in mercury



A well-nourished child is better protected from absorbing the heavy metals

Tips for reducing exposure to heavy metals when feeding children:

- ✓ Make sure water supply has been checked for lead
- ✓ Wash hands and foods to remove residual lead from dirt and dust
- ✓ Include foods rich in iron and zinc, especially when breastfeeding or mixed feeding
- ✓ Choose snacks made with a variety of grains, not just rice

Can the exposure to heavy metals from foods be reduced?

Dietary variety is the best way to ensure a child gets adequate nutrition and can help minimize exposure to any one heavy metal.