


WHY HERBS AND SPICES ARE GREAT FOR BABY WEANING

By Priya Tew, Freelance Dietitian on behalf of For Aisha

A collection of white line-art icons on a pink background, including a star, a crescent moon, a flower, a carrot, a leaf, and a fruit.

Herbs and spices are a wonderful way to add flavour and variety to your little one's diet.

It may seem early to be offering your baby spiced food, but it can help expand their palate and add extra nutrients to their meals.

By 'spices' we definitely don't mean 'spicy' – therefore start with milder spices such as cumin, coriander, turmeric, ginger and cinnamon. Stronger spices such as chilli and smoked paprika may be better left until later on!

If you have been eating meals that are flavoured with herbs and spices whilst pregnant and breastfeeding, your baby will already have been tasting these amazing flavours! Studies show that exposing babies to a greater variety of foods in these early stages can lead to them accepting and eating more of those foods later on; helping to eliminate fussy eating.

Offering spiced, fragrant meals during pregnancy, breastfeeding and during weaning can therefore help move your little one from their first weaning foods to your usual family meals.



BENEFITS OF HERBS AND SPICES

TASTEBUD DEVELOPMENT

Adding simple herbs and spices into weaning foods can help develop your little one's tastebuds. Later in life they will be more likely to eat adventurous foods and become little foodies!

Research tells us that it can take up to 15 tastes of a food for an infant to know if they like it or not, which can be a stressful part of parenting!

We know variety is important in a baby's diet but if they are refusing a food it can be disheartening. Offering foods cooked in different ways with a range of flavours can encourage them to try those foods again. The herbs and spices can make foods more exciting to taste and smell, and stop your baby getting bored with bland tastes and the same meals.

YOU DON'T NEED TO ADD SALT

Babies younger than 12 months should have no more than 1g of salt a day. Using herbs and spices can reduce the need for salt or stock cubes, but still make the food tasty.

Experiment using oregano and basil in a pasta sauce or try a milder curry like the For Aisha Chicken and Sweet Potato Curry or the Jamaican Jerk Chicken.

YOU DON'T NEED TO ADD SUGAR

Herbs and spices add delicious flavours to meals that can enhance the natural taste so you don't need to add extra sweetness. For example, try adding cinnamon to porridge instead of sugar.

The For Aisha range of meals have no added sugars and are accredited by Sugarwise so you can rest assured these are good options for your little ones.

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

Herbs and spices contain high levels of antioxidants which act like Pac Man to neutralise the harmful effects of molecules called free radicals (These molecules can increase the risk of heart disease, cancers and infections).

There are a range of benefits to using herbs and spices in your baby's meals. The key is to start with small amounts and build up quantities over time. Using some specially prepared baby foods like the For Aisha range can be a good start.

Spice	Possible Benefit
Cinnamon	May lower blood sugar May reduce blood pressure and have heart health benefits
Ginger	May lower blood sugar May reduce blood pressure and have heart healthy benefits
Black Pepper	May help speed up digestion and boost mood
Tumeric	Can reduce inflammation in the body May have benefits for your heart health and blood sugar control
Garlic	Can have heart health and blood sugar benefits

NB with all of these spices significant amounts may be needed for full health benefits e.g. 1 tsp or more per day.

Weaning onto these foods from an early age will help little ones to develop a wide taste repertoire for healthy foods so amounts can increase as they grow.



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References:

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Jason Lam. Picky Eating in Children. *Front Pediatr*. 2015; 3: 41.