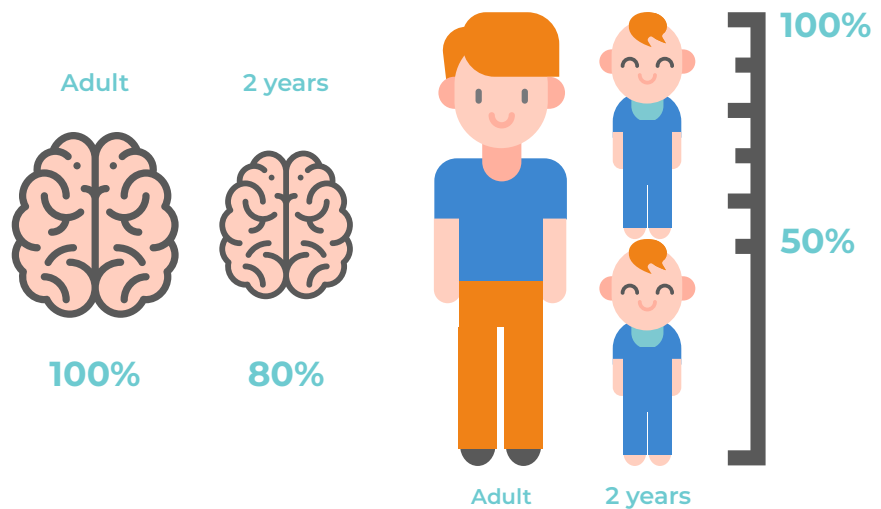


Baby foods: ensuring the highest safety standards

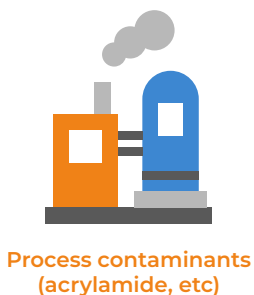
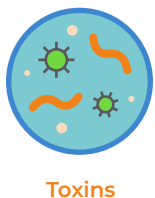
Why do babies need safe food?

The first years of life are important for laying the foundation of health. Babies grow a lot during this time: by the age of 2, a baby reaches around 50% 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.



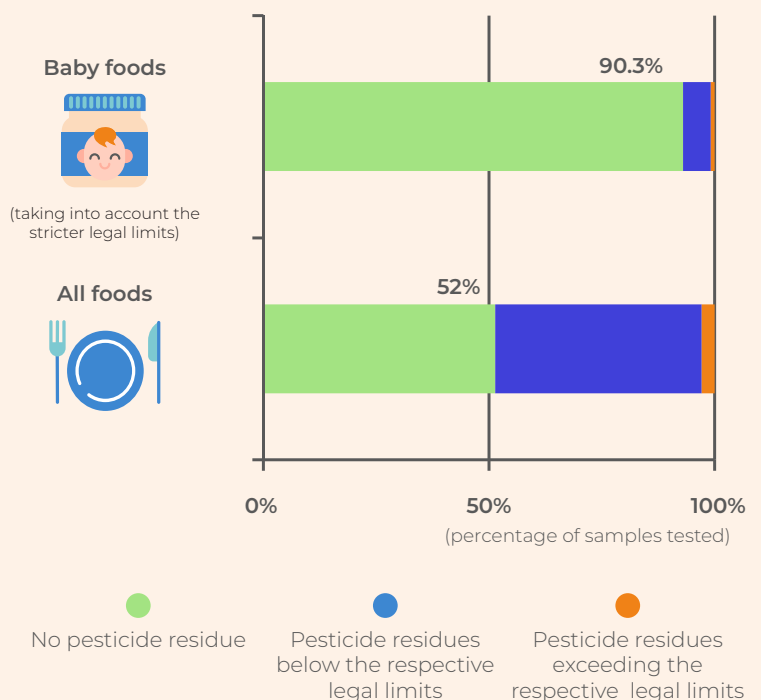
What are food contaminants?



Pesticide residues in baby foods

Commercial baby foods cannot contain more than 0.01 mg of pesticide residues per kilogram. This is an extremely low level compared to the maximum levels applying to general foods.

As a result, commercial baby foods contain less pesticide residues than general foods²:



To protect babies against exposure to food contaminants, the EU limits the level of these substances in commercial baby foods.¹ These limits are much stricter than the limits set for general foods.

To comply with these strict maximum levels, baby food manufacturers must carefully select their raw ingredients and carry out strict controls.

¹ 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

² EFSA (European Food Safety Authority), Medina-Pastor P and Triacchini C, 2020. The 2018 European Union report on pesticides residues in food. EFSA Journal 2020;18(4):6057, 103 pp.

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. The levels applying to commercial baby foods are particularly low and have consequences in terms of agricultural practices, sourcing of ingredients and manufacturing processes.³

Some examples:	Baby foods	General foods
<p>Lead, a heavy metal found in the environment. Maximum level in commercial baby foods: → 4 times stricter than the level for general foods.</p>	 	 <p>4x</p> 
<p>Aflatoxin B1, a mycotoxin produced by fungi and commonly found in cereals. Maximum level in baby foods: → 20 times stricter than the level for general cereals and cereal products.</p>		<p>20x</p> 
<p>Acrylamide, a substance created when certain foods, like potatoes and wheat, are cooked at high temperatures. Benchmark level for baby biscuits and rusks: → 2 to 3 times stricter than the benchmark level for general biscuits.</p>		<p>2 to 3x</p> 

Specific rules for food contact materials

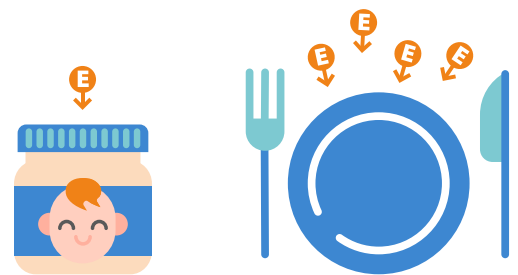
Food packaging contains substances that can end up in the food. To protect babies, packaging must be designed to limit such 'migration' to 0.01 mg per kilogram, and even lower for some substances like plasticisers, varnishes and coatings.

For example, the use of bisphenol A and phthalates, which can be found in plastic packaging, is not permitted in baby food packaging.



Less food additives

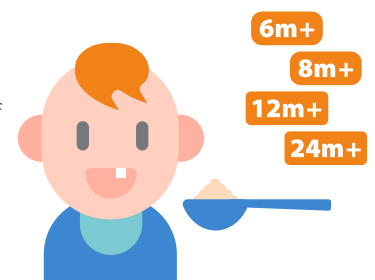
Besides containing less food contaminants, baby foods also contain less additives: 5 times fewer additives are authorised in baby foods compared with general food.



Adapted texture for safe eating

Because babies are at an increased risk for choking, baby foods are specifically adapted to babies' evolving chewing skills. For example, baby biscuits are made to melt in the mouth to avoid any choking risk.

To help parents choose the right food based on their baby's age, labels of commercial baby foods indicate the recommended age range for the products.



Babies need more than a balanced diet to be healthy: they also need food which is specifically manufactured to take into account their vulnerability and to avoid or limit contamination by hazardous substances. The EU has adopted specific rules to limit these 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 in ingredients, manufacturing processes and packaging designs. Being a leader in food research and innovation enables the baby food industry to provide the safest possible food.

³ According to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 of 22 September 2003 setting maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs