

With new state regulations mandating the disclosure of heavy metal levels in baby food, alongside heightened consumer, media, and regulatory scrutiny, medical providers should anticipate an increase in questions from concerned parents and caregivers. Drawing on seven years of experience in addressing consumer inquiries, Clean Label Project—a national nonprofit dedicated to transparency in product labeling and the organization behind the largest study on heavy metals in baby foods and infant formula—has identified the top questions providers may face. This resource turns complex issues into actionable advice, empowering informed decisions for children’s health.

What are heavy metals, and why are they in baby food?

Heavy metals like lead, arsenic, mercury, and cadmium are naturally found in soil and water, which can result in their presence in crops used for baby food. Heavy metals are in our food source - these metals aren’t added intentionally but can be absorbed by plants as they grow. They are of particular focus in baby food and infant formulas because babies are small and the first 1000 days of life is an extraordinary time of brain and immune system development.

Is it safe to feed my baby commercial baby food and formula?

Commercial baby foods and formulas are generally safe. Offering a variety of foods is a smart way to minimize potential exposure to heavy metals from any one source.

How do heavy metals affect my baby’s health?

Long-term exposure to high levels of heavy metals can impact brain development and disrupt other bodily functions, but occasional low-level exposure is generally not harmful.

Which baby foods are most likely to contain heavy metals?

Rice-based products, root vegetables, and certain fruits like apples and grapes may have higher levels of heavy metals. Offering a variety of foods is a smart way to minimize any potential exposure to heavy metals from any one source.

How can I reduce my baby’s exposure to heavy metals?

Offer a diverse range of foods, especially those rich in iron and calcium, to support the reduction of heavy metal absorption. Choose products featuring the Clean Label Project certification seal, which indicates that brands are committed to sourcing ingredients and formulating products with stringent measures to minimize heavy metals and other contaminants.

Are homemade baby foods safer than store-bought?

Homemade foods can be a good option, but generally heavy metals are naturally present in soil and water. This means they can be found in both store-bought and homemade baby food.

Is organic baby food free from heavy metals?

Organic baby foods may have lower levels of pesticides but are not necessarily free from heavy metals, which are present in the environment. The issue of heavy metals is applicable to all foods.

Should I avoid rice-based products entirely?

Rice-based products should be limited, but they don’t need to be entirely avoided. Alternatives like oats and barley can be offered.

What is the government doing to regulate heavy metals in baby food?

Ongoing efforts at the state and federal level are being made to reduce heavy metal content in baby food. In the meantime, choosing brands with Clean Label Project certification seal is a good step as these companies are proactively and voluntarily going above current requirements to monitor and minimize heavy metals and other contaminants in their products.

Should I get my baby tested for heavy metal exposure?

If you have concerns, let’s talk about your child’s potential exposure risks and whether testing might be beneficial. While food is one possible source, other exposure routes could include water, soil, and even paint, particularly in older homes.

