



A GUIDE TO YOUR BABY'S FIRST YEAR

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INTRODUCTION

When the husband and I had Layla, we were overwhelmed with the amount of information coming at us for her first year: everything from what to buy, what to feed her, whether to use formula, whether to make our own baby food vs. buy it, what type of schedule she should be on as she got older, etc. I did a ton of research, to help us navigate through all of the information out there, and after getting a lot of questions from first-time parents, thought it might be helpful to compile all of my research into an ebook for all of you!

INTRODUCTION

From birth through your baby's first birthday, this eBook will help guide you through some of the critical milestones like:

- A detailed explanation of baby gear (what to buy, what not to buy and what we actually used and loved!)
- Breastfeeding vs. formula feeding: with a detailed guide on what the healthiest organic formulas are for your baby, and how to find them!
- Preparing baby food at home with tips and tricks on how to make it easy (and cheaper) than buying pre-made baby food at the store!
- A sample feeding & sleeping schedule for your baby from age 6-12 months!

I hope this becomes a resource and guide for you as you make your way through these exciting first months with your beautiful new baby!

BABY GEAR RECOMMENDATIONS

There are SO many baby-related items you can buy when getting ready to welcome your little one, it's hard to know what's necessary and what brands are the best! Some of these things are incredibly useful and indispensable, and others just end up collecting dust in your home. This guide is meant to help cut through all of that information, and give you the absolute must-haves for your little one.

Everything in this section are things we used almost every day and LOVED - I'd recommend all of these items in a heartbeat. Anything that's not included in this section we basically never used and ended up donating or giving away!



TRANSPORTATION

We went with the UppaBaby line of carseats and strollers. It was a little pricier, but I liked how easy they were to use/latch/unlatch and fold up.

CARSEAT RECOMMENDATION

My carseat recommendation goes to the **Uppa Baby Mesa**. It's super easy to install and secure enough for an infant.

Hint: You'll also need **the base**.



STROLLER RECOMMENDATION

For strollers, I'd recommend the **Uppa Baby Cruz**. We opted for this above the Vista because the Vista is HEAVY. And to think about managing that, along with an infant, diaper bag, carseat, etc. was just not going to happen if I was on my own. The Cruz is perfectly sized, compact, cheaper than the Vista and easy to travel with.



CAR MIRROR RECOMMENDATION

The **Brica Baby In-Sight Mirror** is a great (and cheap) way to see your baby when they're in the car and are rear facing.





SLEEPING

Layla was a terrible sleeper for the first 8 weeks. She literally ***did not sleep*** from 9pm-4am every single day for 8 weeks straight. She also never slept in the car, on a plane, or in the stroller from the moment she was born. It was ridiculous. The husband and I were so tired we started hallucinating imaginary babies in our house! It was crazy. Here are my recs for the best sleep solutions for even the worst sleeper ever.

BABY SWING RECOMMENDATION



This **Fisher Price Cradle & Swing** saved our lives. This was literally the only place Layla would sleep: swaddled, put in the swing, with it on. Once we started using it we went from short stretches at night, to Layla sleeping for 10-12 hours at night without waking up (at around 8 weeks old)! I think it taught her how to sleep through the night at a young age, because the rocking motion of the swing would put her back to sleep if she woke up. I don't know what we would have done without this amazing device. Even if your baby is a good sleeper, it's a great place to put them if you need some hands free time! The rocking motion + music + mobile in the swing are all helpful in keeping your baby entertained and relaxed (whether they are awake or asleep!).

TRAVEL CRIB RECOMMENDATION

We used the **Baby Bjorn Travel Crib**. Much more lightweight, compact and easier to assemble than a pack n play -- and served all of the same functions that a pack n play would (e.g. a playyard if Layla was awake but needed to be in an enclosed space so I could get some stuff done), and we got a ton of mileage out of this because Layla would use it as a toddler bed when we traveled until she was 3!



NOISE MACHINE RECOMMENDATION

We used the **Marpac Dohm-DS All Natural Sound Machine** from Week 1 onwards. Another sleep saver that's a MUST. Layla has always been a light sleeper so we still keep it on in her room to drown out outside noise so she doesn't get woken up!



BABY MONITOR RECOMMENDATION

We used this video monitor from **Motorola**. I preferred the video monitor over just audio, especially once we started sleep training and once Layla began standing/sitting in her crib while falling asleep. It's been super reliable - going strong for 3 years now!



SWADDLING RECOMMENDATIONS

The **Miracle Blanket Swaddle** really is a miracle. We bought 4 of them - they come in lots of colors too which is nice. All of the other swaddle blankets were useless for us. Layla got out of them in 0.5 seconds and did not sleep. This was the only swaddle that she stayed in, that suppressed her startle reflex, and calmed her down when she was sleeping or upset.



SWADDLING RECOMMENDATIONS

After 3-4 months, we transitioned to the **Merlin's Magic Sleep Suit**. They have two sizes, 3-6 months and 6-9 months. It looks ridiculous but works like a charm and is great for transitioning out of the swaddle. Layla would immediately calm down in it, and we were able to sleep train her in it, and she slept 12 hours straight through the night in her crib from 4 months onwards.



GOOD SWADDLERS THAT **DIDN'T WORK FOR US**

- 1** The **Aden + Anais Swaddles**. Totally useless as a swaddle, but great as a baby blanket. So even though we didn't use these for a swaddle we loved putting them on Layla when she was in the carseat or stroller, to block the sun when she was in the car, or even as a makeshift nursing cover when we were out.
- 2** The **HALO Sleep Sacks**. These just ended up collecting dust at the bottom of Layla's dresser. Sometimes we'd use them as a blanket when we were out and about if it was a particularly cold day, but we couldn't really find a good use for these. I'd suggest you buy the Miracle Blanket first! You can always transition to the looser swaddles (Aden + Anais, HALO) as your baby gets older.

THINGS WE **DIDN'T** BUY

- 1 A Pack n Play: bulky, hard to assemble, and generally useless I felt. The baby bjorn travel crib was sufficient and had more functionality!
- 2 A bassinet. Because Layla slept in the swing, we didn't need one. But it might still be worth getting a bassinet or some sort of bedside sleeper unless you have your baby's crib in your bedroom for the first couple months.



NURSING & FEEDING

Nursing a baby is HARD! Nursing Layla never became easy for me, even though I stuck with it (nursing and pumping) for about 8 months. If you're having trouble nursing, you are not alone! You can read more about my experience nursing [**here**](#). The following recommendations are primarily around nursing, but if you need formula related recommendations, you can use [**this post**](#) as your guide!

BREAST PUMP RECOMMENDATIONS

For Layla, I used the **Medela Pump in Style**. It came with my insurance and was pretty good. I also tried the hospital grade breast pump and rented that for 3-4 months -- which I found to be more comfortable than the Pump in Style.

For Baby #2, I'll be using the **Spectra S1 Breast Pump** which came out after Layla was born and all of my mom friends swear by it -- they say it's more comfortable and they get more milk than any other pump! Most insurance companies will reimburse it as well (mine did).

PUMPING BRA RECOMMENDATION

I loved this pumping bra from **Simple Wishes** - makes pumping so much easier!

Tip: This **Nursing Cream** (for sore nipples!) helped a ton in the beginning.



NURSING PILLOW RECOMMENDATION

I loved **My Breast Friend** - tons of support and way better than the boppy. I could even nurse hands free with it sometimes!

Bonus: I liked these **Milk storage bags** to store in the freezer.

Also, these Burp Cloths from **SpaSilk** are super soft and absorbent, and durable too!



BOTTLE RECOMMENDATION

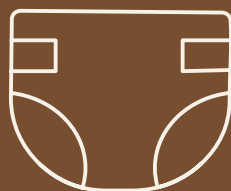
We used Dr. Brown's. They have a **wide neck** version and a **narrow version**. While they have a ton of parts, they are the best for lessening air bubbles for babies and they have a slower flow nipple so they work well if you are nursing also (so your baby doesn't get too used to a super fast flow and then gets lazy when nursing!) Plus, they are dishwasher safe!



BOTTLE CLEANING RECOMMENDATIONS

You can use a regular dish rack, or something like [this](#), or [this](#) which helps keep all those smaller bottle parts separate. You'll also want something like [this](#) for your dishwasher so that the bottle parts don't get lost! The main tip here is: you don't have to sterilize everything constantly. Just throw all the bottles and parts in the dishwasher and run it every night, and you'll be good to go. But you will need someplace to take the bottles out and let them air dry after the dishwasher is done, hence the bottle drying rack.

For dish soap / bottle soap: We used any clean/organic soap (free & clear, unscented) like [7th generation](#).



DIAPERING & CHANGING

DIAPER & CREAM RECOMMENDATIONS

We used **Pampers Sensitive Wipes** and **Pampers Swaddlers Diapers**. We liked Pampers the best because we literally never had leaks or diaper rashes with these diapers.

Layla only got diaper rash a few times, and those times we used **Desitin**, or this other **Diaper Rash Cream**. We used **Aquaphor** as an “everyday” butt cream. Mainly to prevent diaper rash. And it worked really well - it was like a lotion/diaper rash preventor for Layla’s butt!

DIAPER BAG RECOMMENDATION

We used this one from **JJ Cole** and it worked well for us - it was affordable, simple and had enough pockets and an extra changing pad which was helpful.

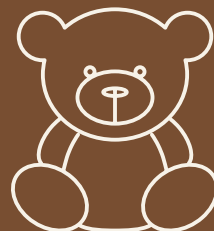
Helpful tip: **Doggy Poop Bags** are handy to put your dirty diapers in when you're out and about!



CHANGING RECOMMENDATIONS

For **diaper pails**, my main tip is do not get the diaper genie. It's a waste - especially since you can't use regular trash bags for it (you have to buy special diaper genie bags!) Instead, we liked this **Ubbi Diaper Pail**. It was super easy to use, it takes regular trash bags, and it doesn't smell!

These **waterproof changing pad liners** from **Munchkin** were amazing. We put this on top of our changing table pad's cloth cover - which was great because every time we had an accident, we just replaced these instead of having to wash the entire changing pad cover. We had 10 of them in rotation!



TOYS

The disclaimer here is that babies don't really need toys. You'll get a lot of toys as gifts, and the best gifts we got were board books which Layla still loves to read, and stuffed animals which Layla now uses for imaginary play. Here are a few other things we had for Layla that entertained her for the first 9 months of her life :)

TOY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Activity Mat: We liked this **Fisher Price activity mat** and got a ton of mileage out of it until Layla was about 8 months old. And even after that, she still liked playing with the toys from the mat!
- 2 **Sophie the giraffe**: Was great for chewing and teething. Layla loved slobbering all over this toy!
- 3 These **stacking cups** were a big hit too.
- 4 This **bouncy chair** from Fisher Price was another great “toy” that also functioned as a place to put Layla when I had to do something really quickly. It was also great for bringing into the bathroom with me while I showered and got ready!



BATHING

BATH RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 We liked this **bathtub**. Easy to use, easy to clean, and affordable!
- 2 Wash Cloths: We got tons as gifts, but liked **these** the best.
- 3 We used **California Baby Super Sensitive Fragrance Free Body Wash & Shampoo**. It's tear free, has great ingredients, won't irritate your baby's skin, and we still use it for Layla to this day!
- 4 I also love **BabyLove and HiPP**, - they have different body wash, cleansing wipes, and baby lotion options, and even various diaper rash creams!



OTHER ITEMS

CARRIER RECOMMENDATIONS

I love the **K'Tan** -- it's like a wrap but all the work is done for you. The downside is that you need two sizes for dad/mom because it's not one size fits all, so there was no way the husband could fit into the XS K'Tan for me!



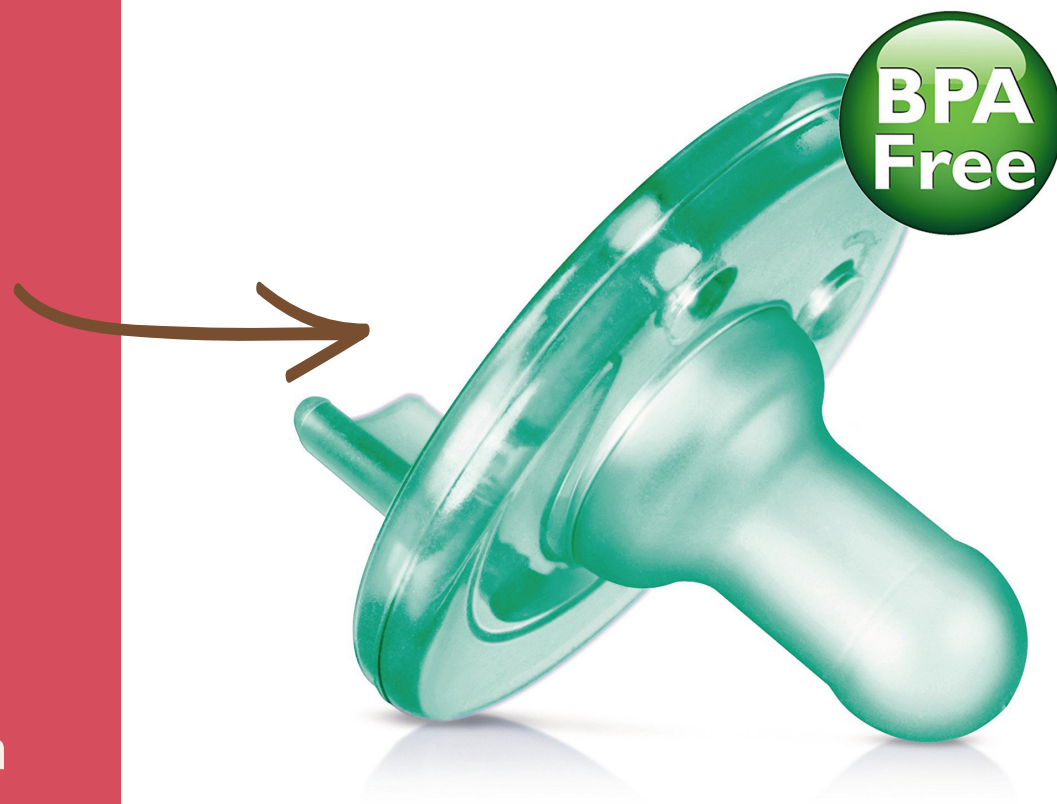
CARRIER RECOMMENDATIONS

A lot of people swear by the **Ergo**. We got one as a gift, but Layla hated it for the first 6 months (the infant insert that comes with the Ergo wasn't comfortable for her at all). Ergo came out with a new **carrier** that doesn't need the infant insert, so that might be a good one size fits all option.

The upside of the Ergo is it's one size fits all, but facing inward + the infant insert + the structure of it didn't work for Layla. We used the Ergo a little more between 6-12 months, but the K'Tan was really our go-to for the first year of Layla's life. And after Layla turned 1, she didn't really want to be in a carrier anymore (although some kids will hang out in the Ergo and be happy for up to 2 years).

PACIFER RECOMMENDATIONS

We loved the **Soothies** **Pacifiers**, and they are the only ones Layla would use! I know some babies like the **Nuk** **Pacifiers** too - but Layla never took to those. My tip would be to buy one of each first, and then figure out which one your baby likes before buying more of a particular brand!



NAIL CLIPPER RECOMMENDATIONS

Your baby's nails will grow fast! We loved the **Safety 1st Sleepy Baby Nail Clipper** and still use it for Layla. You can also file your baby's nails using this **nail file** if you're scared of cutting their tiny nails at first!



BLANKET RECOMMENDATION

Cotton blankets are the best, and as mentioned earlier, I really used the **Aden + Anais Swaddles** as blankets for Layla when we needed one!



CLOTHES RECOMMENDATIONS

My main tip here is to think about items that would be easy to put on (and take off!!) the baby.

Zippered onesies (vs. the ones with 8 million buttons) are the way to go. Imagine trying to unbutton all of those buttons at 3am after a diaper blowout?? No thank you. Zippered onesies all the way.



OTHER IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 NoseFrida Snot Sucker:** This sounds strange, but it is seriously the only thing that works when your baby has a stuffy nose. The bulb suction things you get at the hospital are totally useless in comparison!
- 2 Laundry Detergent:** We used any free & clear detergent like **7th Generation** - the important thing is that it's free of dyes, sulfates, fragrances, etc.
- 3 Humidifier:** This is great for the winter months or if your baby has a cold / is congested!

OTHER IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 Sunscreen: We liked **Badger Baby**, **HiPP's Sensitive Sunscreen**, and **Babyganics**.
- 5 We bought a ton of **cloth diapers** because they are super cheap and you can use them for everything: burp cloths, wash cloths, cleaning up messes, these things are useful, and they last forever.

BABY FORMULA RECOMMENDATIONS

A NOTE...

We've all heard the advice: "Breast is best." Exclusively breastfeed until your baby is 1 year old. Nurse on demand. Formula is "poison." For a few moms, that advice is easy to follow: they had a natural birth, had so much milk they could donate it, breastfeeding was pain-free, and their baby latched effortlessly. And while I wish it were that easy, unfortunately for many moms, it's not.

Breastfeeding is HARD. Not hard as in “oh this is hard I don’t feel like doing it,” but hard as in: my baby won’t latch; I have low milk supply; my baby isn’t gaining weight; I physically can’t breastfeed because I have a health condition; my nipples are sore/bleeding/cracked/blistered; I’m in excruciating pain; I have no place to pump at work; I have mastitis; I’ve seen x# of lactation consultants and I’m still having problems nursing; etc.

Since I’ve had Layla, I’ve gotten a bunch of questions from new moms about breastfeeding, baby food, and what formulas – if any – are safe and healthy for their little ones.

DISCLAIMERS

- 1** Organic formulas are more expensive than regular formula. I realize that not every parent has the financial means to buy organic formula for their little ones, and that is ok! If you don't have the means, just do what you can for your baby. No judgments here.
- 2** Not every baby likes every formula. Some formulas constipate some babies. Again, if you try the formulas I recommend and they don't work for your baby – that's ok too!
- 3** I am advocating a world of no judgments when it comes to breastfeeding or formula feeding. All you can do as a mom is your best. Whether you breastfeed for a year, or 6 months or 1 month, or 0 months doesn't make you a better or worse mother. A happy healthy mom and happy healthy baby is all that matters.

INGREDIENTS

What I learned in my research is that the US doesn't have very strict standards when it comes to organic baby formula. Ingredients that really shouldn't be in baby formula appear all the time in many organic brands.

The ingredients that shouldn't appear in organic formula (as outlined by the National Organic Standards Board and are banned in the EU) include:

- 1 Processed Refined Sugars (Syrup, Syrup Solids)** – corn syrup (glucose syrup solids), maltodextrin (a partially hydrolyzed starch derived from corn, rice, or potatoes), sugar, or brown rice syrup. Manufacturers use these because they are cheaper than lactose (which is what should be in formula).

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Synthetic DHA and ARA** – DHA and ARA are naturally found in breastmilk, but the DHA and ARA added to formula are extracted from algae and fungus, often using hexane (a neurotoxic petroleum-based solvent). The National Organic Standards Board has guidelines against this, but the USDA still allows it in organic formulas sold in the US. The issue of hexane in formula is a complicated one — and I have more details about that later in this book!
- 3 Synthetic Preservatives** – ascorbic palmitate and beta carotene are the common ones here.

INGREDIENTS

4 Synthetic Nutrients – this includes lutein, lycopene, nucleotides, taurine, l-carnitine and l-methionine. These are banned in formulas in the EU, but are allowed in the US (go figure). I won't go into details on each nutrient listed above, but many are processed with neurotoxic solvents or are either themselves listed as a toxic ingredient.

Note: Palm Oil is in most formulas (EU & US), but it can form “soaps” in the baby's intestines – which can cause digestive issues/gas/etc. Unfortunately, almost every single formula in the US market has one or more of these ingredients included. Even the EU formulas have Palm Oil (but they have less of it, so it doesn't cause digestive issues). Organic formula is still better than conventional formula – because at least organic formula is made with non-GMO ingredients and the milk used is hormone free.

THE BEST FORMULAS & WHERE TO BUY

HiPP Organic, Holle Lebenswert, and Holle Organic are three brands from the EU that have wonderful ingredient lists for their formulas. In my opinion, HiPP and Lebenswert are the best, and Holle is a close runner up. I used HiPP for Layla, and it worked great for us.

THE BEST FORMULAS & WHERE TO BUY

1

Organic Baby Food: They are an amazing, reputable, online retailer based in the EU who can ship to the US for free! They sell **HiPP**, **Lebenswert**, and **Holle**, along with **Hypoallergenic formula** and **Goat's Milk formula**. They have reasonable prices, reliable shipping (within 1-3 business days!), amazing customer support and I have been in contact with the owner personally. In addition to baby formula they also have a variety of **organic cereals and snacks** for babies from HiPP/Holle/Leb, as well as a line of **baby care products** (shampoo, lotion, calendula) that are gentle and free of any synthetic ingredients so they are perfect for babies!

THE BEST FORMULAS & WHERE TO BUY

2

Organic Start is an amazing, reliable, online retailer based in the US with fast & FREE shipping! I have spoken with Peter, the owner, multiple times and after researching, I feel confident in recommending Organic Start as a resource for purchasing **HiPP**, **Lebenswert**, and **Holle** in the US. Peter is a father of triplets who is passionate about making the best European formulas available in the US. Organic Start also sells **Topfer**, **Goat Milk Formula**, **Anti-Reflux**, and **Hypoallergenic Formula**. Note: If you're looking to buy **HiPP UK**, **HiPP Dutch**, **HiPP Germany**, **Holle**, **Lebenswert** or **Holle Goat Formula** in BULK (with a bulk discount!) I highly recommend **Organic Start Wholesale**. (The wholesale arm of Organic Start).

THE BEST FORMULAS & WHERE TO BUY

3

MyOrganicFormula: One other retailer based in the US for **HiPP**, **Holle**, and **Lebenswert** is: **MyOrganicFormula**. For babies with allergies, MyOrganicFormula has a list of allergy-friendly formulas, they have **Goat's Milk formula**, and they also sell **BabyLove**!

THE BEST FORMULAS & WHERE TO BUY

The upcoming page has a chart of the organic baby formulas out there, outlining which have the ingredients above. The chart is ranked from best to worst formula. At the top of the chart I've included a hypothetical line for the “ideal” formula – so you have something to measure all of the other formulas against.

Note: This chart is as of August 2017. For future updates, please visit my [**blog post**](#) on formulas.

Brand of Organic Formula	Overall Ranking (Green = Best, Yellow = Ok, Red = Worst)	Type of Carbohydrate in 2017 (Syrup Solids in Most Cases)	Sugar, Syrup or Syrup Solids Used?	Prebiotics or Probiotics:	Maltodextrin?	Palm Oil?	Soy Oil?	Synthetic (Hexane-extracted) DHA & ARA?	Natural DHA & ARA? (e.g. From Eggs)	Lutein?	Lycopene?	Nucleotides?	Taurine?	L-Carnitine?	L-Methionine?
The Ideal Formula		Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
HiPP (Dutch)	1	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes (Pre)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
HiPP (UK, Germany)	1	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes (Pre)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Holle Lebenswert	1	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Holle PRE	1	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Baby's Only with Whey	1.5	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Topfer	2	Organic Skimmed Milk and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes (Pro)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Baby Love	2	Organic Skimmed Milk and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes (Pro)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Holle	2	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Happy Baby	3	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes (Pre)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Plum Organics	4	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Baby's Only with Brown Rice Syrup	5	Organic Brown Rice Syrup	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Earth's Best with DHA	6	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey and Fructooligosaccharide (FOS)	Yes	Yes (Pre)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Earth's Best without DHA	6	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey and Fructooligosaccharide (FOS)	Yes	Yes (Pre)	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Honest Co. Formula	7	Organic Glucose Syrup Solids	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Vermont Organics	8	Organic Glucose Syrup Solids	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
365 Whole Foods Organic	8	Organic Glucose Syrup Solids	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Bright Beginnings	8	Organic Glucose Syrup Solids	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Parent's Choice Organic	8	Organic Glucose Syrup Solids	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Similac Organic	9	Organic Sugar	Yes	Yes (Pre)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Grass Fed by Munchkin	Not Organic, But 100% Grass Fed	Organic Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Organic Whey ONLY	No	Yes (Pre)	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Pure Bliss by Similac	Not Organic, But 100% Grass Fed	Skimmed Milk, Lactose and Whey ONLY (non GMO, grass fed)	No	Yes (Pre)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

APPENDIX

- 1 There is no perfect formula, but some are still much better than others.
- 2 Baby's Only with Whey is probably the best in the US (that you can buy at your local grocery store).
- 3 If you can afford it, shipping your formula from Europe is the absolute best way to go, and HiPP or Lebenswert are the best formulas out there!

APPENDIX

- 4 Regarding Hexane-extracted DHA and ARA, I have gotten confirmation that both HiPP and Topfer use hexane-extracted DHA/ARA – but they both claim that 100% of the hexane is removed after extraction and it is not detectable in their formulas. Given that these are European formulas and the guidelines in Europe are much more stringent than the US guidelines, I'm inclined to believe them. Pages 57-61 have a detailed look at the hexane extracted DHA in formula and why it's not a major concern.
- 5 Regarding GrassFed and PureBliss, they are not organic formulas, but they are non GMO and antibiotic free, and their ingredients list is relatively clean. They are available in the US and are better than all of the non-organic formulas available in the US today.

HEXANE EXTRACTED DHA/ARA IN FORMULA

I spoke with an expert who has her BS in Biology with a minor in Chemistry, who worked in an organic chemistry lab for 2 years and worked with many solvents used in extractions, compound purification, and analysis, and then went on to get an MS in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. She is extremely knowledgeable when it comes to hexane and extraction methods, so I asked her for her thoughts on how concerned we should be about hexane-extracted DHA/ARA in formula. Here is the summary:

HEXANE EXTRACTED DHA/ARA IN FORMULA

- 1 Hexane is often used as extraction solvent for extracting fats. This is because it has a low boiling point when compared to most fats, which makes it easy to get rid of post-extraction – leaving the fat behind.
- 2 To get rid of Hexane, chemists use a large apparatus called a “rotary vap” that gets rid of the solvents and you end up with a pure powder substance (usually a chemical compound). The next step is to check the purity of the compound using a machine called an NMR or MS, which tells you whether you have any of your solvent left.
- 3 This woman told me that she never, ever found an issue with having hexane still present after drying her sample.

HEXANE EXTRACTED DHA/ARA IN FORMULA

- 4 Since formulas are a powder, they are heated to the point of water removal, and therefore the hexane should be all gone. It is unlikely that hexane is left in properly treated formula, but you are placing trust in the formula and manufacturing industry that all formula is being properly prepared.
- 5 Note: All oils that don't have a cold-pressed process are extracted using hexane – this includes corn oil, soy oil, vegetable oil, etc. (unless otherwise specified on the bottle). Hexane is also used during the development process for drugs – many drugs are purified in a hexane solvent and then it is dried off. So if you are going to question hexane, you need to be aware of the other areas where it is used in our regular food and drug supply!

HEXANE EXTRACTED DHA/ARA IN FORMULA

- 6 When it comes to being concerned about hexane vs. other questionable ingredients in organic formulas – maltodextrin, soy oil, etc., I'd be more concerned about maltodextrin vs. hexane extracted DHA. This is because maltodextrin's glycemic index is much higher than table sugar and I personally believe a lot of issues today come from sugar and inflammation, and even when hexane is used it should be gone by the time the formula is packaged.

HEXANE EXTRACTED DHA/ARA IN FORMULA

- 7 Unfortunately, there is no formula out there that doesn't have at least one of the "offending" ingredients I have listed above! For me personally, I would choose hexane-extracted DHA over maltodextrin or soy oil for example. This is because soy oil is also extracted using hexane, and maltodextrin has an extremely high glycemic index. In addition, formulas that contain soy oil or maltodextrin are 100% guaranteed to contain these ingredients, versus hexane which is likely not traceable in a formula that has used it as a method to extract DHA/ARA before the formula has been prepared!

BABY FOOD RECIPES AND TIPS

When it came time to transition Layla to solids, I did a lot of research on whether to make baby food at home or whether buying the pre-made packets was the same. I found, with the right tools, making baby food at home was simpler, healthier, and cheaper than buying the pre-made pouches! When you make baby food at home you can control exactly what goes into it. Most pre-packaged baby food is a mix of fruits and veggies, and they go heavy on the fruit so that it tastes good, so it becomes hard for your baby to really develop a taste for pure vegetables. I wanted Layla to get used to the taste of vegetables early -- so that she wouldn't be turned off by the bitterness of kale or the less-sweet taste of broccoli later on. There are a few baby food brands that literally just have one vegetable in their package, but they are expensive. Also, when you make baby food at home you can add spices and other things into it to enhance the flavor and help develop your baby's palate! And later on, once you get past purees, you can just blend what you are eating for dinner or mash it up so that it's easy for your baby to chew.

TOOLS YOU NEED

- 1 A great blender like a **Vitamix**.
- 2 A set of ice cube trays like these from **Mumi & Bubi**.
- 3 Gallon sized ziploc **freezer bags**.

That's it! I made Layla's food in bulk (a couple ice trays worth) - so I only had to make each puree once every 3-4 weeks and had enough to last for almost a month. I kept all of the frozen baby food ice cubes in gallon sized ziploc freezer bags, and labeled the bags so I knew what was in there. Super easy, and healthy too! Note: The only time we used the pre-packaged baby food was when we were traveling, since those packs were easier to buy and travel with than the ice cubes.

TIPS FOR INTRODUCING FOODS TO BABY:

- 1 Introduce one food at a time, and make sure your baby doesn't have a reaction to it before you move on to the next food.
- 2 We started with avocado first, then sweet potato, then pear, then green beans, and then the rest of the purees in this section! For the first 4 foods, we waited 2 days before introducing a new food, but after that we introduced a new food every day or every other day.
- 3 Rice cereal is useless -- basically has zero nutrients, and doesn't need to be the first food you give your baby (unless you suspect that your baby has severe allergies or unless your pediatrician tells you to). We never gave Layla rice cereal.

TIPS FOR INTRODUCING FOODS TO BABY:

- 4 Instead of rice cereal, you can grind up oatmeal in the food processor or buy Baby Oatmeal (we liked Earth's Best). With the oatmeal, we just mixed it into the purees so Layla would get some grains with each puree she had.
- 5 If your baby doesn't seem to like a puree, don't give up! Sometimes it takes over 20-30 tastes of a food before your baby starts to like it. Also, babies go through "moods" so even if one day your baby doesn't like green beans, keep offering it to them and I promise that a few months later your baby will eat those green beans! You can also use **these baby cereals** that mix well with the purees.

AVOCADO PUREE



INGREDIENTS:

1 organic avocado, mashed

INSTRUCTIONS:

If Serving Fresh / Immediately

- *Mash the avocado with a fork or blend it in a food processor.*
- *Mix with breastmilk, formula or water to reach desired consistency.*

If Freezing

- *Mash the avocado with a fork or blend it in a food processor.*
- *Divide into ice cube trays, cover, and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*
- *Once defrosted, mix with breastmilk, formula or water to reach desired consistency.*

NOTES:

Each ice cube = 1oz of food. As your baby gets used to solids, you don't have to thin out the avocado at all.

PEAR PUREE

INGREDIENTS:

5 organic pears
4-6oz water (for a thicker puree, use less water)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Wash fruit. (Any type of pear will do - I use Bosc or Bartlett).*
- *Cut pears in half and remove seeds and stem. Cut each half into 6 pieces.*
- *Put pear and water into a large pot. Turn the burner on high and cover with a lid.*
- *Cook for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally.*
- *Blend in a blender, puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, wrap/cover, and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*

NOTES:

Spice up your baby's food! To pear puree, you can add a pinch of ginger powder, a pinch of cinnamon, or even a bit of mint.

APPLE PRUNE PUREE

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 Organic Fuji Apples
- 20 Organic Prunes (dried plums)
- 8-10oz water (for a thicker puree, use less water)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Cut in half and remove seeds and stems.*
- *Cut each half into 4-6 pieces*
- *Remove pits from prunes (or - timesaver: get pitted prunes!)*
- *Put apples, prunes, and water into a large pot.*
- *Cover and turn the burner on high.*
- *Cook for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally.*
- *Pour Into a blender, puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays and allow it to cool. Cover/wrap, and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*

NOTES:

Add a pinch of cinnamon, nutmeg, or all spice to this recipe!

GREEN BEAN PUREE



INGREDIENTS:

2 bags organic frozen green beans
Water for pureeing (use as much as you need for the consistency you want! start with 6oz and work your way up).

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Place the green beans in a steamer and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, or until tender.*
- *Drain green beans and place in blender with water.*
- *Puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, wrap/cover, and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*

NOTES:

Spice it up! Try green beans with garlic powder. To make this more palatable for baby: mix it with plain whole milk yogurt!

PEA PUREE



INGREDIENTS:

2 bags organic frozen peas (usually about 2 lbs)
8oz water

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Steam your peas for 3-5 minutes*
- *Once the peas are green and soft, pour them into a blender and add 8oz water. Puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, wrap/cover, and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*

NOTES:

Mix with your baby's favorite fruit or some sweeter veggies (butternut squash works great) to make peas more palatable!

BUTTERNUT SQUASH PUREE



INGREDIENTS:

2 medium sized organic butternut squash
16oz water, divided

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Preheat oven to 400F*
- *Cut squash in half lengthwise, remove seeds.*
- *Place squash flesh side down on a sheet tray covered with parchment paper.*
- *Pour 8oz water onto the parchment paper.*
- *Roast for about an hour until tender. The squash should be bubbling and caramelized.*
- *Allow to cool 10-15 minutes.*
- *Peel off the outside skin and put flesh into a blender with 8oz water. Puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, then wrap/cover and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*

NOTES:

Serve with a pinch of cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice or ginger.

CARROT PUREE

INGREDIENTS:

2lbs organic carrots
2-2.5 cups of water

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Wash and peel your carrots, cut off stems.*
- *Cut carrots lengthwise and cut each half into 8-10 pieces.*
- *Throw the carrots into a large pot with the water and cook for 6-8 minutes until the carrots are tender.*
- *Pour the carrots and water into a blender, puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, wrap/cover, and freeze.*

NOTES:

Spice up your baby's food! Serve carrots with basil and garlic, or with a pinch of cinnamon and nutmeg.

BROCCOLI, SPINACH & CAULIFLOWER PUREE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound frozen organic broccoli
- 1 pound frozen organic spinach
- 2 pounds frozen organic cauliflower
- At least 16oz water - more for a thinner puree

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Put all of the frozen veggies in your steamer and steam for 5 minutes until the broccoli and spinach is bright green.*
- *Put into a blender in batches (there will be too much to put in all at once). Add water to thin the puree.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, cover/ wrap and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter to defrost.*

NOTES:

Spice up your baby's food! Serve with a pinch of garlic. To make this more palatable for baby: mix it with plain whole milk yogurt!

ZUCCHINI, APPLE & CARROT PUREE



INGREDIENTS:

1 pound organic zucchini
1/2 pound organic carrots
2 organic fuji apples (6oz each)
12oz water

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Cut zucchini in half lengthwise and cut each half into 8 pieces.*
- *Peel carrots. Cut in half lengthwise and cut each half into 8 pieces.*
- *Cut apples in half, remove seeds and stem. Cut each half into 8 pieces.*
- *Add carrots and water into a large pot. Turn on high and cook 8 minutes, stirring occasionally.*
- *Add zucchini and apples and cook another 3-5 minutes.*
- *Pour into a blender, puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, wrap/cover, and freeze.*
- *Thaw in the fridge the night before use, or thaw by putting the ice cube in a bowl over a bowl of hot water on the counter.*



SWEET POTATO PUREE

INGREDIENTS:

2.5 pounds organic sweet potato (2-3 medium)
8-10oz water (more if you want a thinner puree)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Preheat oven to 400F*
- *Cut potatoes lengthwise*
- *Place potatoes flesh side down on a sheet tray covered with parchment paper*
- *Pour 8oz water onto the sheet tray*
- *Roast 60 minutes until tender. The potatoes should be bubbling and caramelized.*
- *Allow to cool 10-15 minutes so you can hold the potatoes without a problem.*
- *Spoon out the flesh/peel off the skin and put into a blender with 8-10oz water. Puree until smooth.*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, allow to cool, wrap/cover, and freeze.*

NOTES:

Spice up your sweet potato! Serve with a pinch of nutmeg, cinnamon, or cardamom.

BLUEBERRY SMOOTHIE



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 packets frozen organic blueberries
- 2 organic fuji apples, cored and cut into big pieces
- 1 banana
- 2 packets frozen organic mangoes

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Add blueberries, apples, mangoes to a pot, simmer for 10 minutes.*
- *Pour into a blender and add banana*
- *Puree until smooth*
- *Pour into ice cube trays, wrap, and freeze.*

INDIAN LENTIL STEW



INGREDIENTS:

2 cups of lentils (any lentil is fine)
1 cup of white basmati rice, brown rice or quinoa
6 cups of water
A combination of 2-3 bags of veggies
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp coriander
1 tsp turmeric
1/2 tsp garam masala
Pinch of Salt
Whole milk organic yogurt (for serving)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Put water, lentils, rice/quinoa, veggies, and spices into a large pot on the stove.*
- *Bring to a boil, reduce to simmer and simmer 1-3 hours until it's the consistency you like, stirring occasionally.*
- *(Alternatively, put all ingredients into a crock pot and cook on high for 4-6 hours)*
- *Mash up, freeze in ice cube trays or store for 5 days in the fridge.*
- *Serve with whole milk organic yogurt.*

OTHER BABY FOOD RECIPES (6-12 MONTHS)

[Green Smoothies](#)

[Homemade Guacamole](#)

[Butternut Squash Soup](#)

[Chunky Black Bean Soup](#)

[Curried Cauliflower Soup](#)

[Curried Lentil Soup](#)

[Cauliflower Mashed Potatoes](#)

[Mashed Potato Cakes](#)

[Lentil & Swiss Chard Soup](#)

[Sweet Potato Soup](#)

[Asparagus with Lemon & Cumin](#)

[Chana Masala](#)

[Khichdi](#)

[Moroccan Chickpea Tagine](#)

[Red Lentil Dal](#)

[Black Bean Chilaquiles](#)

[Black Bean and Sweet Potato](#)

[Enchiladas](#)

SAMPLE FEEDING SCHEDULE (6-12 MONTHS)

Schedules and babies mix really, really well. They keep things predictable for you, they help your baby to understand when meal times, nap times and bedtime are, and they give babies much needed structure in their day.

Babies on a schedule sleep better and longer, eat better, and are generally in a better mood than babies whose days are constantly changing. Here is a sample feeding schedule for your little one (best for ages 6-12 months). Layla was on this schedule since she was about 6 months old (with some modifications as she's gotten older) and it worked great for us!

Of course, all babies are different and develop differently – so this may not work exactly the same for your baby – especially in terms of quantities of food. But hopefully this helps as a guideline for what a schedule for a 6-12 month old might look like.

MORNING ROUTINE

1 8:00am: 5oz Fruit Purees or Chunky Fruit pieces + 2oz Oatmeal

Fruit options: **Blueberry “smoothie”, apple & prune, pear, avocado** to name a few, but honestly any fruit combination works!

2 10:00am Snack (Bottle): 7-8oz bottle or sippy cup (breastmilk or formula)

3 10:30am: Nap

AFTERNOON ROUTINE

- 1 12:30pm Lunch** – 3oz veggies + 2oz lentils / beans + 2oz yogurt / cheese + 1oz grains (quinoa, brown rice, whole wheat pasta).

Veggie ideas: **Green Beans**, **Peas**, **Butternut Squash**, **Carrots**, **Sweet Potato**, **Zucchini** and **Broccoli/Spinach/Cauliflower**. For the lentils/beans, I usually cook them down to be really soft and add spices like cumin, coriander, turmeric, garam masala.

- 2 3:00pm Snack (Bottle):** 7-8oz bottle or sippy cup (breastmilk or formula)

- 3 3:30pm:** Nap

EVENING ROUTINE

- 1** **5:30pm Dinner** – 4oz veggies + 2oz lentils / beans + 1oz yogurt / cheese + 1oz grains (quinoa, brown rice, whole wheat pasta) OR whatever we are eating for dinner.
- 2** **7:00pm:** Bath, Songs, Massage with lotion or coconut oil.
- 3** **7:30pm (Bottle):** 7-8oz bottle or sippy cup (breastmilk or formula).
- 4** **[1 book before bed]**
- 5** **8:00pm:** Bedtime



QUESTIONS?

And that's it! This is my guide for essential baby items, recipes and recommendations for your baby's first year of life. I hope this helped you in navigating the very confusing and extensive world of research when you are expecting a little one. If you have any questions about anything baby-related, please reach out to me at **pickyeats@gmail.com**.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anjali Shah is a food writer, board certified health coach, mom, and owner of **The Picky Eater**, a healthy food and lifestyle blog. Her work has been featured on Oprah.com, Women's Health, Cooking Light, Reader's Digest, CNN, Food Network, Glamour, Ladies' Home Journal, Whole Foods, SHAPE, and at Kaiser Permanente. Anjali grew up a “whole wheat” girl, but married a “white bread” kind of guy. Hoping to prove that nutritious food could in fact be delicious and desirable, she taught herself how to cook and successfully transformed her husband's eating habits from a diet of frozen pizzas and Taco Bell to her healthy, yet flavorful recipes made with simple, wholesome ingredients. Through her blog, The Picky Eater, Anjali shares her passion for tasty, healthy cooking. Follow her on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Pinterest**, or **Instagram**.

