



FACT SHEET

MICROWAVE OVENS

Microwave ovens are now part of many kitchens. Quick, simple meals can be prepared and cooked in the time that it takes to drive to the takeaway. A microwave oven is also a very convenient way to heat or cook food for a growing baby. However, food or drink which has been heated or cooked in a microwave must be stirred thoroughly before feeding. This evenly distributes the heat and prevents “hot spots”. This is particularly important when feeding your baby or young child.

Does Microwave Cooking Affect the Nutrients in Food ?

Microwave cooking is fast and requires little or no added water. Because fruits and vegetables are cooked quickly, this helps to reduce vitamin losses. Some people prefer the flavour and texture of vegetables cooked in the microwave to those that have been boiled or steamed.

How your microwave oven works

A microwave is a short radio wave which travels in a straight line and does not change the structure of the food through which it passes. Microwaves are similar to TV radio waves.
MICROWAVES ARE NOT RADIO ACTIVE AND DO NOT REMAIN IN FOOD ONCE THE POWER IS TURNED OFF.

When you eat food cooked in the microwave oven you are NOT eating microwaves! Once the microwave oven is off the microwaves disappear instantly.

Microwaves have three important features:

- Microwaves react with metal, so don't use metal containers or utensils with metal trim, as this will cause sparks or “arcing”
- Microwaves pass through food without changing the structure of the food
- Microwaves are attracted to moisture, hence fruits and vegetables cook well because of their high water content. Foods with less moisture, such as meat cook differently from conventional methods

How does Food cook in a Microwave?

Microwaves are absorbed by water molecules in the food which vibrate rapidly to produce heat. (A bit like rubbing your hands together on a cold day!) This heat then cooks the food. Once the oven is turned off the food will continue to cook by the heat generated within the food. This explains why food cooked in the microwave requires standing time after being removed from the microwave oven.

Standing time should equal cooking time.

Should you heat Baby's Bottle in the Microwave Oven?

Because there is a risk of scalding your baby's mouth when using a microwave oven to heat baby's bottle, the safest method is to stand the bottle in a container of hot water for a few minutes.

If you MUST use the microwave take these precautions:



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- Microwave at least 120 mls or more of liquid
- REMOVE the bottle top to allow heat to escape. Avoid heating with the teat on.
- Always thoroughly SHAKE the bottle to disperse the heat evenly. Remember that a bottle can feel cool on the outside but be extremely hot in the middle.

Formula will continue to heat once removed from the microwave

- ALWAYS test the temperature of the milk by putting a few drops of liquid on the inside of your wrist before feeding to your baby
- BEWARE when out visiting as microwave ovens vary in power levels. Don't assume that the same time to heat baby's bottle is needed as your microwave at home .
ALWAYS CHECK TEMPERATURE BEFORE FEEDING YOUR BABY.

Heating Baby's Food

Because babies eat very small amounts of food, it is safer to heat it by standing the container of food in hot water for a few minutes. If you do use the microwave, spoon the required amount of baby food on to baby's plate. Heat for only a few seconds. Stir, then test the temperature on the inside of your wrist.

NEVER PLACE A CAN OR JAR – PARTICULARLY WITH THE LID ON - IN YOUR MICROWAVE.

Sterilising

Microwaves do not kill bacteria but heat does. When sterilising baby's bottles in the microwave, there may be areas which don't heat up to at least 70°C (the temperature needed to kill bacteria). There are special units for sterilising bottles which also can be used in the microwave. Boiling or using sterilising solution is also safe to sterilise bottles.

Enjoy the convenience of microwave cooking but take care when preparing food and bottles so that there is no chance of injury to your baby.