



Rinsing baby carrots not necessary

Should we rinse off baby carrots before we eat them?

There's no harm in doing so, but it's not necessary. The only thing that rinsing off baby carrots will do is remove any dirt that might be on the surface. It won't wash away any bacteria, but only very rarely have pathogens been associated with baby carrots.

That could be because carrots have natural antimicrobial properties that fight against some pathogens. In the 1990s, researchers identified substances called phytoalexins, naturally present in carrots. Phytoalexins appear to inhibit the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*, an organism that could cause severe food-borne illness, and puts pregnant women at risk for miscarriage.

Carrots also pack in the nutrition — in fact, carrots are one of the richest sources of carotenoids you can get. The body converts the carotenoid called beta carotene into vitamin A, and a 3-ounce serving of raw baby carrots gives you more vitamin A than you need in a day. Three ounces of carrots also gives you 2.5 grams of fiber, 10 percent of the daily recommendation for vitamin K, and respectable amounts of folate, potassium and manganese.

Although you don't have to rinse baby carrots, food safety advocates do have several recommendations for keeping them tucked nice and safe in the fridge:

- Pay attention to “use-by” dates on the package. If any bacteria are present, they can multiply over time. Throw away baby carrots that are past the use-by date.

- Keep baby carrots dry. Again, if there is any bacteria present, moisture allows it to multiply. If condensation forms, remove the carrots from the bag, dry them with a paper towel or a salad spinner, and put them in a clean bag or plastic container before storing them again in the refrigerator. Be sure to mark the use-by date from the original bag onto the new container.

- If you do rinse baby carrots or other pre-processed produce items, do so just before eating them, or dry them off before storing them again.

The “keep it dry” rule also holds for fresh fruits and vegetables that haven't undergone any pre-processing. But you should *always* rinse those under running water before eating or cutting into them. Such preparation should be done — again — just before consumption.

Even saying all that, the bottom line is: Eat carrots (baby or otherwise) and lots of other vegetables and fruits. Don't let simple food safety guidelines scare you from eating foods that, over the long run, will keep you healthy.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic

(614) 292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Lydia Medeiros, food safety specialist with Ohio State University Extension, researcher with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, and professor in the Department of Human Nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

To receive Chow Line by e-mail, send a message to filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu or sign up at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/subscribe.php>.

Section of Communications and Technology

News and Media Relations

2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

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TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only)
or 614-292-1868