

FEEDING YOUR BABY FORMULA: SAFELY MAKING AND STORING

Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months of life. When your baby starts solid foods, continue to offer breastmilk until your baby is 2 years old and older.

Parents may give their baby infant formula for a number of reasons. Some breastfed babies are also fed formula. If you are having trouble feeding your baby, contact your health care provider, a public health nurse or a lactation consultant.

What formula should I use?

Feed your baby commercial infant formula made from cow's milk until they are 9 to 12 months old. Soy, rice, or other plant-based beverages, whether or not they are fortified, are inappropriate alternatives to cow milk in the first two years. For infants who cannot or should not be fed their mother's breastmilk, pasteurized human milk from appropriately screened donors and commercial or prescription infant formula are suitable alternatives.

Some babies are more at risk of getting sick from bacteria introduced either by preparing bottles incorrectly, unsafe water, or rarely from the formula itself. This is true for babies who:

- were born before 37 weeks, and are under 2 months of age;
- weighed less than 2500grams at birth and are under 2 months of age;
- have a weakened immune system because of a condition or disease.

Ready-to-feed and liquid concentrate preparations are sterile. Powdered formula is not. For babies who are at higher risk, use only liquid formula and sterilized water. Many parents find the liquid formulas less constipating and easier to prepare than powder, but they are more expensive.

You can buy infant formula at most grocery stores or pharmacies. Always use the formula before the expiration date on the package. Never use formula from a container with dents, bulges or other damage.

How do I safely make formula?

- Never leave your bottles and equipment to soak in your sink. Use a separate bin to collect them.

- Always wash your hands and work area thoroughly with soap and warm water before making bottles.
- Wash all bottles and equipment in hot soapy water. Use a bottle brush to scrub the inside of the bottles. This bottle brush should be used only on your bottles.
- Bottles, spoons and nipples should be sterilized in boiling water for 2 minutes and then air-dried before use or storage. Bottles and equipment should be left covered until ready-for-use.
- For higher risk babies, water used for preparing formula should be brought to a rolling boil for 2 minutes, and cooled down to no less than 70°C. It should be used as soon as it is ready so that no bacteria are able to grow. Make sure the water has been cooled to body temperature before using to feed your baby!
- For low-risk babies, you can use water that was previously boiled. If you are using powder or concentrate, it should be used relatively soon after it is made to avoid contamination by bacteria. Reducing the time from preparation to consumption will reduce this risk.
- If it is not possible to serve immediately, all prepared formula in bottles or other types of containers should be refrigerated at 4°C or lower immediately after it has been prepared. The bottles should be used within 24 hours.
- Due to the possibility of the growth of harmful bacteria at temperatures above 4°C, stored formula should only be removed from the refrigerator and re-warmed to room or body temperature immediately before feeding. Warm the bottle in a bottle warmer or by placing the bottle in a container of warm water for no more than 15 minutes. Warming for extended periods means more chance of growth of harmful bacteria.
- Microwave ovens should not be used in the preparation or warming of formula as uneven heating may result in "hot spots" that can scald your baby's mouth.
- Once feeding has started, the individual bottle should be used within two hours. Any leftover formula should be discarded.

How much formula do I give?

Quantities will depend on the age and size of your baby. Talk to your midwife, doctor or lactation consultant to work out an appropriate amount for your baby's needs.

For more information:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guide/resources/infant-feeding/recommendations-preparation-handling-powdered-infant-formula-infant-feeding.html>

<https://www.cps.ca/en/media/dietitians-pediatricians-advise-parents-to-exercise-caution-with-plant-base>