

Feeding Your Baby Infant Formula



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Infant formula is made for babies up to 12 months who are not breastfed. There are many reasons why some mothers don't breastfeed. If you have feelings of sadness and/or disappointment that you are not fully breastfeeding your baby, it is a good idea to discuss these feelings with your nurse or doctor. Try to maintain some breastfeeding if possible, even when you are using formula.

Talk to your nurse or doctor about which cows'-milk formula is best for your baby. Soy formula should only be used when advised by a health professional. Drinks other than infant formula (and breast milk) can make your baby sick. Babies over 7 months may also be offered water to drink. (There is no need to change to follow-on formula at 6 months, when baby will probably start solid foods.)

What you need for formula feeds:

- ventilated feeding bottles and teats with caps, collars, and sealing discs
- bottle brush
- kitchen tongs
- sterilising equipment
 - either a large cooking pot with a lid, or
 - special sterilising solution (or tablets) and a large plastic container with a lid, or
 - a steam sterilising unit designed for microwave sterilising of plastic ventilated bottles, or an electric steam steriliser.

If you use a pot or container, it must be large enough for water to cover everything. A jug with measuring marks is useful for measuring water.

Bottles

- *Glass bottles* are easier to clean than plastic but break more easily.
- *Bottles with straight sides and wide necks* are the easiest to clean.
- *'Disposable' bottles* have throw-away liners only.
- Fully ventilated bottles which eliminate air vacuums are the best option.



Teats

- Newborn babies – one hole gives a slow flow to encourage strong sucking.
- Older babies – more than one hole gives a faster flow.

Formula should drip from the teat at about one drop per second when tipped.

You must wash and sterilise all feeding equipment until baby is at least 3 months old (including any items used with breast milk). When baby is older, thorough washing and rinsing is enough.

Washing

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry them on a clean cloth or paper towel.
- Wash bottles thoroughly inside and out with a bottle brush and warm soapy water. Wash any other items used, in the same way.
- Clean teats in warm soapy water, using a teat brush.
- Rinse everything well in hot water and air dry – or wash in dishwasher.



Sterilising - boiling, steaming, or with chemicals

If sterilising by boiling:

- fill a large pot with water
- place all the washed items in the water, ensuring no air is trapped and everything is covered with water
- put lid on and bring to boil
- boil 5 minutes
- turn stove off, and keep pot covered until you need items.

When you need to make up a feed, wash and dry your hands thoroughly and use the sterilised tongs to lift out bottle, etc. If you remove items before you need them, cover and store in a clean place – assemble bottles with teat inside and lid on.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions if you are steam sterilising – in an electric or microwave steam steriliser, or chemical sterilising – with sterilising tablets or solution.



Buying and storing dry formula

- Choose the right formula for the age of your baby.
- Check the 'use by' date on the (undamaged) tin.
- Store in a firmly closed tin, in a cool dry place.
- Use the powder within four weeks of opening the tin.



Mixing formula

Formula is best made up fresh in time for each feed. If you are carrying baby's feed out with you, see 'Transporting feeds safely' on page 10.

1. Clean and disinfect a surface on which to prepare the feed.
2. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water, and dry on clean cloth or paper towel before handling sterilised equipment or making formula.
3. For the first 3 months, all water used for formula should be boiled and cooled, on the day you use it. If using an automatic kettle to boil water, wait until the kettle switches off, or if using a non-automatic kettle let the water come to a rolling boil, then boil for 3 minutes. Cool boiled water in a covered, sterilised container in fridge. Keep only 24 hours.
4. Measure the correct amount of water into the sterilised bottle before adding powder – use scoop and instructions provided with each tin.
5. Level the powder with a clean knife but don't pack down. Add the correct number of full, level scoops of powder to the measured water in the clean, sterilised bottle.
6. Seal the bottle with the cover and cap. Shake or swirl the bottle gently until formula is mixed thoroughly.
7. Handle and store the prepared formula with care. Infant formula powder is not sterile. The temperature at which babies like their formula is also a perfect temperature for harmful bugs to grow.

- Never add more powder or less water than recommended. This could make your baby very sick.
- Never add anything else into the formula feed.

In cities and towns, after your baby is 3 months old, you can use water straight from the tap to make formula. Run the tap for 10–15 seconds before you collect the water. If you are concerned about water quality, continue to boil and cool water until baby is 6 months old. **Bore-water and tank water should be boiled until baby is 18 months old.** If you have a bore, check with your local public health unit that your water is low in nitrate.

Warming formula

- Formula should be warmed gradually by placing the bottle in a container of hot water.
- Before feeding baby, test the heat by shaking some on the inside of your wrist (without touching teat) before feeding baby. It should feel just warm.
- After a feed, throw away any unused formula. Never reheat formula that has already been warmed or offered for feeding.
- Many older babies are happy with cold or room temperature formula.
- Microwaves are not recommended for warming feeds because they can easily overheat the milk or heat it unevenly. This will burn the baby's mouth. However, if you choose to microwave formula to warm it:
 - shake the formula after heating then let it sit for 2–3 minutes
 - shake it again, then test the heat with a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should feel just warm.

Storing formula

- Ideally make up formula just before use.
- If this is not possible, prepared formula may be stored:
 - at room temperature for no more than 2 hours
 - in the back of the fridge (0–4°C) for no more than 4 hours.
- Use a warmed-up formula bottle within 20 minutes.
- Never re-heat warmed or used feeds.

Feeding time

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly.
- Some sleepy newborns may need waking up to feed. (If you are worried because your baby is sleepy and hard to feed, talk to your nurse or doctor.)
- Sit in a comfortable chair with your elbows, arms and back supported.
- Hold baby in the bend of your arm – it may be more comfortable to switch arms mid-feed.
- Hold baby nearly upright to help prevent ear infections caused by formula flowing into the middle ear.

Hold bottle:

- with enough teat in baby's mouth to form a tight seal
- with the teat in the centre of the mouth and over the tongue
- at an angle so formula fills the teat and bottle-neck
- firmly so baby can pull against it while sucking.

Take the teat out of baby's mouth sometimes to allow the teat to un-flatten. Winding (burping) lets baby bring up any air swallowed during feeding. If baby wants to stop feeding too soon, they may need burping before they can go on feeding.

Feeding time

Your baby needs time for sucking, looking at and listening to you, and skin-to-skin contact.

Hold your baby while feeding to:

- stop choking
- keep the bottle at the correct angle to prevent ear infections
- give the love and cuddles that your baby needs.

Do not leave baby lying with a bottle to suck on – if babies fall asleep with milk in their mouth, their teeth can be damaged by the milk.



How much does my baby need?

Age, weight, time of day, activity level, illness and rate of growth can all affect a baby's formula needs. The tin of formula will have general guidelines. Babies are usually fed on demand, so learn your baby's signals. For the first few days, your newborn baby may need to suck but not drink much.

Most formula-fed newborns will need around 6 to 8 feeds in 24 hours for the first few weeks. **Some** may stop a night feed after about 6 weeks. Gradually increase the quantity of feeds during the day. At about 2 months old, there will probably be 3–4 hours between feeds.

You can tell if enough formula is being fed if your baby :

- is content and settles for a couple of hours after a feed
- is gaining weight at a steady rate
- has 6 or more very wet nappies every day.

In hot weather or if your baby is unwell he or she may need extra feeds.

Transporting feeds safely

Formula should not be made up in advance, as harmful bugs can grow in formula. Before leaving home:

- Measure the correct amount of cooled, boiled water for 1 feed into a cleaned (and sterilised if baby under 3 months) bottle and screw lid on tightly.
- Carry the correct amount of formula powder separately in a clean and sterilised (if baby under 3 months) container.

Prepare an extra bottle of water and enough extra powder (in a second container) to allow for delays.

- Mix the water and powder only when your baby requires a feed.
- If you are travelling by car, stop to feed your baby. If you give a bottle to a baby in a car seat, they could choke.

Once over 7 months, your baby may need extra drinks of water on a long trip, especially in summer.

Don't keep bottles of made-up formula warm. If you must transport a prepared bottle, keep it cold in a chilly bin or insulated bag and use within 2 hours.

If you need advice and support with breastfeeding or formula feeding ask for help from:

- Your family doctor and practice nurse
- Well Child nurse and Plunket Karitane Family Centre
- Your midwife or a lactation consultant
- La Leche League (breastfeeding advice and support only)
- Community or private practice dietitian
- Parents Centre.

For more information ask your health worker for *Eating for Healthy Babies and Toddlers from Birth to 2 Years Old* Code HE1521.

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Notes



Breast milk is best for babies. If you breastfeed and give formula as well, your supply of breast milk may decrease. It is possible to go back to breastfeeding after stopping, but it's difficult. Social and financial implications should be considered when choosing to use an infant formula. Advice on the proper use of an infant formula should be sought from a health practitioner.

This resource has been developed to enable health practitioners to provide objective and consistent advice to mothers who have made the decision to either partially or fully formula feed their baby.

New Zealand Government



This resource is available from www.healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider at your local DHB.

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