



Feeding Your Baby Formula Safely Making and Storing Formula

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 and older.

Parents may give their baby infant formula for a variety 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. You can also call HealthLink BC at **8-1-1** to speak with a registered nurse or registered dietitian.

What formula can I offer?

Feed your baby a store-bought (commercial) infant formula made from cow milk until they are 9 to 12 months old. Soy-based infant formulas are only recommended for babies with a medical condition called galactosemia (g-lak-toh-see-me-ah) or for babies who do not drink dairy for religious or cultural reasons.

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

Follow the directions on the label when making formula. Always wash your hands and work area thoroughly with soap and warm water before making formula.

Do not feed home-made infant formula, cow milk or other animal milk to your baby. They are not safe and do not give your baby the complete nutrition they need to grow and develop.

What are the different types of infant formula?

There are 3 types of formula: ready-to-feed; liquid concentrate; and powdered. Ready-to-feed and liquid concentrate are sterile (free from germs) until they are opened. Powdered formula is not sterile.

Some babies have a higher risk of getting sick from powdered infant formula and should be fed ready-to-feed or liquid concentrate formula. These babies include those who:

- Were born premature, before 37 weeks of pregnancy, and are under 2 months of age
- Weighed less than 2500 grams at birth and are under 2 months of age
- Have a weakened immune system, meaning they are more likely to get sick if exposed to germs

Healthy babies born at full term, which is 37 weeks or more of pregnancy can be fed any type of store bought formula. If you use powdered formula, prepare it carefully.

If you do not have a safe source of drinking water, use ready-to-feed formula. You can also make liquid concentrate or powdered formula with bottled water that has an unopened seal. If you are not sure if your water is safe, check with your local public health unit. If you are not sure what type of formula to feed your baby, talk to your health care provider.

How do I clean and disinfect the bottles and equipment to make formula?

Every time you make formula, wash, then disinfect the bottles and equipment for as long as your baby drinks formula. Disinfect means to kill any germs that could make your baby sick. Dishwashers do not disinfect. Follow these steps:

1. Gather together the measuring cup, bottles, nipples, rings, discs, caps, spoons and knife
2. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Wash your sink and work area
3. Wash all bottles and equipment in hot, soapy water. Use a bottle brush to scrub the inside of the bottles and nipples. Only use that brush to clean bottles and nipples
4. Rinse everything in hot water
5. Place the clean supplies in a large pot
6. Fill the pot with water until everything is covered with water. Do not cover the pot
7. Bring the water to a boil and boil for 2 minutes
8. Use disinfected tongs to remove all items from the pot. If you don't use these items right away, let them air dry on a clean paper towel or cloth. When they are dry, cover and store them in a clean place. Do not touch the inside of any equipment that can be in contact with the formula

How do I prepare and store ready-to-feed formula?

Do not add water to ready-to-feed formula. Pour the amount you think your baby will drink into a clean and disinfected bottle.

Store unopened formula cans in a cool, dry place. Store opened cans of formula in the fridge. Cover opened cans with plastic caps or plastic wrap. Throw cans out after 48 hours or follow label instructions.

How do I make and store liquid concentrate formula?

To make liquid concentrate formula, follow these steps:

1. Boil water in a kettle or in a pot on the stove for 2 minutes. If you use a kettle, make sure it does not shut-off by itself as soon as the water starts to boil.
2. Let the boiled water cool to room temperature before mixing it with the formula.
3. Carefully measure and mix the formula, following the directions on the label. The label will tell you how much liquid concentrate and water to use.

If you make more than 1 bottle at a time, cool them quickly and store them in the fridge. Use mixed formula within 24 hours.

Store unopened formula cans in a cool, dry place. Store opened cans of formula in the fridge. Cover opened cans with plastic caps or plastic wrap. Throw cans out after 48 hours or follow label instructions.

How do I make and store powdered formula?

The safest way to make powdered formula is to follow these steps:

1. Boil water in a kettle or in a pot on the stove for 2 minutes. If you use a kettle, make sure it does not shut-off by itself as soon as the water starts to boil.
2. Let the boiled water cool to no less than 70°C (158°F). Water less than 70°C (158°F) is not hot enough to kill harmful germs that may be in the powder. Use a digital thermometer to check the temperature.
3. Follow the directions on the formula label to measure and mix the water and formula together. The label will tell you how much formula powder and water to use.
4. Cool the formula to feeding temperature and use right away.

If you make more than 1 bottle at a time, cool the bottles quickly and store them in the fridge. Use the mixed formula within 24 hours.

For healthy, full-term infants, you can use water that has been boiled for 2 minutes and cooled to room temperature to prepare powdered infant formula. Use the formula right after making it.

Infant formula machines are not recommended because the water may not be kept at a safe temperature.

To safely store any infant formula, your fridge must be 4°C (39°F) or cooler. If you are not sure, use a fridge thermometer.

Store unopened formula cans in a cool, dry place. Once the cans are opened, store in a cool, dry place with the lids tightly closed. Do not store them in the fridge. After a can is open, use the rest of the powdered formula within 1 month, and before the expiration date. When you first open the container, write the date on the lid to help you remember.

How do I get the formula to the right temperature to feed my baby?

If just made, powdered formula is too hot to feed to your baby. Cool it by putting the bottle under cold running water or in a bowl filled with cold water and ice.

Formula stored in the fridge can be fed to your baby right out of the fridge or warmed first. Your baby will show you what they prefer. Warm it by putting the bottle under warm running water or in a bowl of hot water for no more than 15 minutes. Make sure the ring of the bottle and the nipple do not get wet from the tap water.

Test the temperature by shaking the bottle 1 to 2 times and pour a few drops of formula on the inside of your wrist. If the formula feels warm, but not hot, then you can feed it to your baby.

Do not warm formula in the microwave. Microwaves heat unevenly and create hot spots. Hot spots in the formula could burn your baby's mouth.

Once you start feeding, use the bottle within 2 hours. Throw out any leftover formula. Do not reheat formula during a feed or refrigerate a partly used bottle.

How can I feed my baby away from home?

If you plan to be away for 2 hours or less, place prepared formula in an insulated bag or cooler with an ice pack. Use the formula within 2 hours.

If you plan to be away from home for longer than 2 hours, the safest option is to bring unopened ready-to-feed formula with you.

For More Information

If you have any questions about feeding your baby, contact your local health unit or your health care provider. You can also call **8-1-1** to speak to a registered nurse or registered dietitian.

To learn more about infant formula, see:

- [HealthLinkBC File #69a Feeding Your Baby Formula: Before You Start](#)
- Health Canada – Infant formula www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/infant-care/infant-formula.html