

Formula Feeding

Deciding how to feed your baby isn't always easy. Breastfeeding is best for your child's growth and development. But sometimes, for medical or personal reasons, store-bought infant formula is used instead of, or in addition to, human milk.

Make an Informed Choice

Make sure you have all the information you need to make an informed choice. Contact your health care provider or the public health nurse, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. They can talk with you about the benefits, risks and costs of each option. And if you decide to use formula, they can help you choose the type that's best for your baby.



DID YOU KNOW

The World Health Organization, Health Canada, Dietitians of Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the B.C. Ministry of Health all recommend that babies be fed only human milk for the first 6 months. After your baby is eating solid family foods, human milk remains an important source of nutrition. If possible, continue to breastfeed until your child is 2 years or older.

If You Use Formula

Breastfeed, too, if you can

Give your baby human milk whenever possible. If you feed your baby formula, try to give it *in addition* to your own milk (see [Supplementing](#)).

If you're not currently breastfeeding but hope to breastfeed your baby in the future, talk with your health care provider about how to keep up your milk supply. Or find a lactation coach through the British Columbia Lactation Consultants Association (bclca.ca).

Use formula safely

Talk with your health care provider or the public health nurse or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to learn how to prepare and store formula safely.

Health Canada inspects all store-bought infant formulas for safety and nutrition. But it's possible for formula to come into contact with bacteria or to be missing an ingredient. To check for product recalls and sign up for safety alerts, visit the Government of Canada's Health Risks and Safety webpage at healthycanadians.gc.ca.



DANGER

If you use infant formula, choose only store-bought cow's milk-based varieties (or store-bought soy-based formula, if your child can't have cow's milk-based). Other beverages don't provide the nutrition your baby needs.

Never use these in place of infant formula:

- ✗ evaporated or condensed milk
- ✗ cow's milk or goat's milk (okay after 9 to 12 months only)
- ✗ nut "milks," like almond, cashew and coconut drinks
- ✗ other "milks," like rice, potato, soy and hemp drinks



BE AWARE

Using a home machine to prepare infant formula can be unsafe. The machine may not heat the water enough to kill any bacteria the formula might contain, and it may not dispense the right amount of powder.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Although human milk is best, sometimes formula is necessary. If you need to use formula but feel uncomfortable or guilty about doing so, talk with your health care provider. And remember that no matter how you feed your baby, you can use feeding times to build a close and loving bond with your child.

In areas where the level of manganese in drinking water is too high, use another source of water to make infant formula. Don't drink or use discoloured water to prepare food or infant formula until your water's safety is confirmed.



DID YOU KNOW

If you have concerns about your drinking water, contact your health authority. Visit [gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/health-authority-contacts](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/health-authority-contacts).

