

# Feeding Your Baby Infant Formula



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Infant formula is made for babies 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 breastfeeding your baby, it is a good idea to discuss these feelings with your health practitioner.

Talk to your health practitioner about which formula is best for your baby. There are many brands of formula, and choosing which one to buy can be difficult. Soy formula should only be used when advised by a health practitioner. Drinks other than infant formula and water (and breast milk) can make your baby sick.

## What you need for formula feeds:

- feeding bottles and teats with caps, collars, and sealing discs
- bottle brush
- sterilising equipment
  - either a large cooking pot with a lid, or
  - special sterilising solution (or tablets) and a large plastic container with a lid.

The pot or container must be large enough for water to cover everything. A jug with measuring marks is useful for accurate measurement of 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.

## 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 three months old (including any items used with breast milk). When baby is older, thorough washing is enough.

## Washing

- Clean bottles thoroughly inside and out with a bottlebrush and warm soapy water.
- Clean teats in warm soapy water. Rubbing salt in the teats helps.
- Rinse bottles and teats with cold running water, squirting water through teat holes. Make sure salt is completely washed out.
- Wash measuring jug (if used) in hot soapy water and rinse with clean water.



## Sterilising

- *Boil the feeding and mixing utensils in a pot of water big enough to cover everything.*
  - Boil all utensils for five minutes.
  - If using glass bottles, a clean cloth in the bottom may stop chipping.
  - Use clean tongs to lift everything out, and drain well.
  - Store with the teat upside-down in the bottle (or cover the teat with the sterile cap).



Follow the manufacturer's instructions if you use any of the following methods:

- *Chemical – in a plastic container*
- *Microwave – with a special microwave sterilising unit (not for glass bottles)*
- *Steam sterilizer.*

## 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, a cool dry place.
- Use the powder within four weeks of opening the tin.



## Mixing formula

1. Wash your hands with soap and water, and dry them well, before you handle sterilised equipment or make formula.
2. Boil water for 3 minutes and allow it to cool to lukewarm (body temperature). Boil and cool all water, including bought water, on the day you use it. Cover water as it cools and until you need to use it.
3. Measure the correct amount of water into the sterilised bottle before adding powder.
4. Level the powder with a clean knife but don't pack down. Add the correct number of full, level scoops of powder to the prepared bottles.
5. Seal the bottle with the cover and cap and shake well to mix.
6. Prepare just the amount you need for baby's next feed, and prepare this as close as you can to feeding time. If you are travelling with baby, see 'Travelling with your formula-fed baby' on page 10.
7. Handle and store prepared formula with care. Infant formula powder is not sterile. The temperature that 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 (ie, tea or sugar).
- Infants are not usually ready to start solids until age 4-6 months.
- Talk to your health worker if you think your baby is still hungry after formula feeds.

After your baby is 3 months old, you can use water straight from the tap **if you are on town supply**. **Bore-water and tank water should be boiled until baby is 18 months old.** If you have a bore, check with your local council that your water is low in nitrate.

## Warming Formula

- Place the cold bottle in a jug of hot (not boiling) water until it is lukewarm.
- Shake to warm evenly, and test the heat by shaking some on the inside of your wrist (without touching teat) before feeding baby.
- After a feed, throw away any unused formula. Never reheat formula that has already been warmed or offered for feeding.
- Store warm water only in baby bottle carriers, **not made up formula**.
- Many older babies are happy with cold or room temperature formula.

## Warming formula in a microwave oven

It is best not to put the bottle of formula in a microwave oven as it can easily overheat or heat unevenly. This

will burn the baby's mouth. However, if you choose to use a microwave follow the instructions below.

- Microwave formula in a sterilised jug, then pour into a sterilised bottle.
- Let it sit 2-3 minutes, shake it, then test the heat with a few drops on the inside of your wrist.



## Storing Formula

- Cool sealed bottles of formula quickly under cold running water.
- Store at 4°C in the back of the fridge (check your fridge temperature).
- Use a warmed-up formula bottle within 20 minutes and throw out any prepared formula that's been out of the fridge for more than 4 hours.
- **Do not keep prepared formula in the fridge for longer than 24 hours; ideally shorter times are better.**

## 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 health worker.)
- 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.





## 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 six weeks. Gradually increase the quantity of feeds during the day. At about two 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 6-8 wet nappies every day.

## Travelling with your formula-fed baby

Formula should not be made up before travelling.

Before travelling:

- measure the correct amount of boiled water into a sterilised sealed bottle and reseal it
- place the correct number of full level scoops of formula powder into a separate sterilised sealed container (or clean container if the baby is over three months of age).

You can carry the bottle of water in an insulated bag to keep it at feeding temperature. Prepare an extra bottle of water and enough extra powder (in a second container) to allow for delays.

While travelling:

- mix the water and powder only when your baby requires a feed
- stop the car before feeding your baby. It is not safe to take the baby out of the car seat while the car is moving. If you give the baby a bottle when it is in the car seat the baby could choke.

Your baby may need extra drinks of cooled boiled water on a long trip, especially in summer.

**Don't keep bottles of made-up formula warm.**

Ask your health worker – Plunket nurse, midwife, family doctor, well child provider – for more advice about formula feeding or about changing your baby's food.

For more information ask your health worker for *Eating for Healthy Babies and Toddlers from Birth to 2 Years Old* Code 1521.

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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.

