

Infant Formula Feeding Tips

This information focuses on helping parents and caregivers make safe feeding decisions and avoid practices that could be harmful to their child's health, who may be experiencing challenges in providing formula for their child.

Parents and caregivers who typically use their SNAP benefits to purchase formula and are currently unable to, should use the following guidance:

- **Consider a substitute formula that meets FDA requirements:** For most babies, it is safe to use a similar version of their formula. Generic or store-brand formulas can be less expensive and nutritionally equivalent to name brands. For babies who need specialized formulas for medical reasons, consult your healthcare provider before changing brands.
- **If you buy formula online, only purchase from reputable, well-known retailers or pharmacies.** Avoid buying from individuals, social media groups, or auction sites to prevent counterfeit or unsafe products.
- **Make smaller bottles:** Make only the amount of formula that your baby will eat in the bottle to decrease the amount you will have to dump out if the baby doesn't finish.
- **Do not make or use homemade formula:** According to the FDA, homemade formulas often lack important nutrients that babies need to grow and stay healthy. In some cases, this can lead to serious health problems, like low calcium, poor weight gain, and electrolyte imbalances that may require hospitalization.
- **Dilute formula correctly:** Always use the mixing instructions from the manufacturer. Watering down infant formula can be dangerous and even put a baby's life at risk. It can cause them to miss out on important nutrients and lead to serious health problems.
- **Do not feed your baby cow's milk** or other non-dairy milks until 1 year of age, unless you've talked to your child's healthcare provider. Cow's milk does not offer the right balance of nutrients. It can lead to intestinal bleeding or cause nutrient deficiencies.

- **If your child is developmentally ready, you can start solid foods.** Talk to your healthcare provider about introducing age-appropriate foods to support growth and development.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider:** Families should consult their healthcare provider to discuss the best options for their child. Healthcare providers can provide guidance on comparable formulas and specialized formulas to meet their baby's medical and nutritional needs.
- **Breastfeed your baby:** When possible, breastfeeding is the healthiest option for infants. The Iowa WIC Program offers breastfeeding assistance to eligible new mothers, including peer counselors, breastfeeding experts, and breastfeeding aids. Details on WIC's breastfeeding support and the peer counseling program can be found at the following [website](#). Call your WIC clinic for more information.
 - For parents who are breastfeeding and need additional support, the [Iowa Breastfeeding Database](#) is a great place to find local resources – including lactation professionals and breastfeeding support groups in your community.
 - Breastfeeding women can access a breast pump at low or no cost through their insurance provider, Medicaid, or WIC to assist with milk supply.
 - Several birth hospitals in Iowa also offer breastfeeding support and parent education. Individuals should check with their local hospital to see what services are offered.

HHS reminds parents that state and community resources, such as WIC, are available to help with the cost of formula. For help finding food, call 211 for community resources and services near you.

For more information, visit:

- [Infant Formula \(FDA\)](#)
- [Questions & Answers for Consumers Concerning Infant Formula \(FDA\)](#)
- [FDA Advises Parents and Caregivers to Not Make or Feed Homemade Infant Formula to Infants](#)
- [Is Homemade Baby Formula Safe? \(American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)