

Feeding Infant Formula to Newborn Babies

Getting started

This handout explains the different types of infant formula and how to prepare them. It also includes feeding tips and what to do with leftover formula.

Breastfeeding is best for babies and prevents problems that can go along with formula feeding.

For parents who need to use formula for their newborn, the directions in this handout will help you give it as safely as possible. Ask your baby's doctor if you have any feeding questions as your baby grows.

What brand of formula should I buy?

All formula brands that are sold in stores in the U.S. must meet federal standards. You can use any formula that is meant for full-term babies.

If your family has a history of type 1 diabetes or a true allergy to cows' milk, talk with your baby's doctor about using a *hypoallergenic* formula.

What type of formula is best?

There are 3 basic types of formula you can buy:

- Ready-to-feed
- Liquid concentrate
- Powder

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics do not usually give out ready-to-feed formula. If you are a WIC client, talk with your clinic staff about your options.

It is rare for bacteria to grow in formula powder, but it can happen. This is why we recommend you use a **premixed ready-to-feed sterile formula or liquid concentrate** until your baby is 2 months old.



If you need to use formula for your newborn, the directions in this handout will help you give it as safely as possible.

How do I prepare the formula?

Ready-to-feed Formula

Ready-to-feed formula does not need mixing and can be fed to your baby at room temperature. To prepare it, simply shake the bottle to dissolve any milk solids that may have settled to the bottom.

Liquid Concentrate Formula

Liquid concentrated formula needs to be mixed with water. **Carefully follow the mixing directions that are on the container.**

Powdered Formula

Powdered formula needs to be mixed with water. **Carefully follow the mixing directions that are on the container.** Also, make sure to follow these guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and the Federal Drug Administration:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before preparing the formula.
- Clean all feeding equipment in hot, soapy water. You may want to use a bottle and nipple brush to make sure they are cleaned well.
- Plan to prepare only enough formula for 1 feeding at a time and give it to the baby right away. Do **not** store prepared powdered formula for another feeding.

To keep bacteria from growing, you must heat the water before you mix it with the formula. Follow the directions on the World Health Organization website: www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/micro/PIF_Poster_en.pdf. Or, if you got your powdered formula from WIC, ask clinic staff about how to heat the water to prevent bacteria growth.

Can I store leftover or opened formula?

- If your baby does not drink all of the formula from the bottle during 1 feeding, throw away the leftover formula.
- **Powdered formula:** Do **not** keep any bottles that you have already prepared.
- **Liquid ready-to-feed or concentrated formula:** If you have opened a container of liquid formula but have not used it right away, store it in the refrigerator and use it within 24 hours.

How do I warm a bottle of formula that was in the refrigerator?

- Place it in a pan of hot (not boiling) water.
- Shake the bottle from time to time while it is warming.

- Test drops of the formula on your wrist before feeding it to your baby. It should **not** feel hot or cold.
- Do **not** use the microwave to warm formula. It could cause serious burns.

How do I feed my baby?

What to Use

- Use a glass or flexible plastic (*polyethylene* or *polypropylene*) bottle.
- Nipples come in many different shapes and kinds. You may need to try different nipples to find the one that is best for your baby. For most babies, slow-flow nipples are best. Healthy sucking is smooth and strong and you will hear fairly quiet swallowing. Babies often stop to take a rest or a breath before sucking some more.

How to Feed

If your baby is premature or has a health problem, the nurses, therapists, and doctors will give you special help and information about safe feedings.

If your baby is not having any problems, follow these guidelines:

- Feeding is an important time to show your baby love, closeness, and attention. Always hold your baby so you can look at each other when you give the bottle.
- Most babies feed well when they are held slightly upright with their head aligned with their body.
- It is best to change the arm you use to hold your baby during feedings. If you use your left arm at one feeding, use your right arm at the next feeding. The different positions help your baby's head and eyes develop.
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle or prop the bottle in your baby's mouth. Doing so can cause choking or spitting up. It can also lead to tooth decay and ear infections. And, your baby will not have your attention and closeness during the feeding.

Timing

The right time to feed your newborn baby is when you see feeding cues. These cues include smacking lips, tongue movements, turning toward anything, touching their face, or sucking on their hands. Crying is a *late* cue.

Pacing

Be sure to let your baby decide how quickly or slowly the feeding goes. Start by touching the nipple of the bottle to your baby's lips. When their

mouth opens wide, put the nipple deeply in the baby's mouth, on top of their tongue.

Follow your baby's cues. It is normal for babies to pause from time to time during the feeding. This allows them to breathe and rest.

A baby who is feeding safely sounds quiet when sucking and swallowing. The baby should not struggle to breathe. Take breaks along the way and let your baby stop eating when full.

Amount

- Your baby will not always drink the same amount of formula each time you feed. Most babies show you that the feeding is over by turning away or falling asleep.
- Do **not** force your healthy growing baby to finish a bottle if you see signs that they are done feeding. Newborns who receive formula can be overfed.
- Most babies of average size take less than 1 ounce at each feeding for the first 1 to 2 days. After that, they need **about 2** to 3 ounces each feeding until they are about 2 months old.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UW Medical Center
Lactation Services:**
206.598.4628
- Northwest Hospital
Lactation Services:**
206.668.2118
- Valley Medical Center
Lactation Services:**
425.228.3440, ext.
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