



Baby Formula Shortage 2022: Tips for Parents to Safely Feed Babies

The National formula shortage has many families feeling anxious about how to safely feed their babies. Because of the shortage, many formula brands are out of stock in stores around the country with some communities being more affected than others. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends only human milk or formula for babies until 12 months and to add solid foods around 6 months. Nurse practitioners (NPs) and other health care providers can provide support and guidance to families on how to safely feed their babies.

6 Tips to Feed Your Baby Safely

To help parents safely navigate the formula shortage crisis, the information provided are recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), and The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, and Children (WIC).

1. Use generic brand name formulas

- If you can't find your baby's formula, try store-brand formula that is like your baby's usual formula from CVS, Walmart, Target or other reputable retailers. Call your health care provider if your baby is not tolerating the new formula well.
- Store brands don't make medically necessary specialty formulas. If your baby is on a special formula because of a medical problem, talk to your NP or other health care provider about safe comparable specialty formulas.
- WIC or local food banks can provide other brands of baby formula and ready-to-feed formula.
- If your child is older than 6 months and on regular formula, cow's milk may be given for up to 1 week if you cannot find any formula. Long term use of cow's milk is not safe since it can lead to low iron in the blood which can affect the baby's development. Talk with your NP or health care provider before starting cow's milk.

2. Avoid unsafe formula practices

- Do not add extra water to the formula. This can dilute the nutrients and lead to low sodium levels in the blood and other serious health problems.
- Don't make homemade baby formula or use evaporated milk. It has risks for contamination and incorrect balance of nutrients that can harm your baby.
- Don't use solid foods to stretch formula supply if your baby is less than 6 months old. Talk with your NP or health care provider before giving your baby solid foods.



- Don't give cow's milk substitutes such as soy, almond or oat milk. It lacks the right amount of nutrients.
- Don't give goat's milk. It is not approved for babies in the U.S.
- Don't give toddler formula to babies under 1 year. The AAP warns against its use. It doesn't provide the right nutrients for infant growth. If there are no other choices, it can be used for babies close to 12 months for a few days.
- Don't buy more formula than you need for a 10 day to 2-week supply to help ease the lack of supplies in the stores.

3. Caution when buying formula online

- Trusted social media sites and parent groups can help you find available formula.
- Avoid buying formula online from sources you are unfamiliar with or at auction sites. It could be a fake product.
- The AAP warns against buying online formula overseas. It is not regulated by the FDA.
- Currently formula from foreign countries is being imported to the US to help with the shortage.

4. If you are pregnant, have a newborn or recently stopped feeding your baby human milk

- Consider the health benefits of human milk and potential risks of formula feeding and challenges with shortages when making the decision on how to feed your baby.
- Seek prenatal education and connect with a NP or health care provider who is supportive of human milk feeding to help you make an informed decision.
- If you are not giving your baby any human milk, consider re-lactating to build back up your milk supply. This process can be difficult the further out you are from birth. Seek a skilled lactation consultant if you plan to re-lactate.
- Consider pasteurized donor human milk from a certified human milk bank. This option may be costly and availability is often restricted to babies in medical need.

5. If you are partially breastfeeding consider these options

- **Transition back to full breastfeeding** to use less baby formula. Seek a lactation consultant who can help you increase your supply. Careful monitoring of your baby's growth will be necessary as you gradually increase your milk supply.
- **Pasteurized donor human milk** from a certified human milk bank. This option may be costly and availability is often restricted to babies in medical need.
- **The AAP warns against informal milk sharing due to safety risks while the ABM urges families to carefully consider safety and to follow their guidelines if using human milk other than their own.** Seek out a lactation consultant to help you with this process.
- Don't purchase human milk from the internet or from any source you don't know and trust. Seek out a lactation consultant to help you.



- If your premature baby is using formula to fortify human milk talk with your provider to see if you need to continue.
- When feeding, place only the amount the baby will eat to not waste any of your human milk supply.

6. If you are exclusively breastfeeding

- Consider donating your excess milk to a local milk bank that is certified by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA).

Resources: More information on formula shortage

American Academy of Pediatrics

[With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any?](#)

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

[ABM Statement on Shortage of Breastmilk Substitutes](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Information for Families During the Infant Formula Shortage](#)

Department of Health and Human Services

[Information for Families During the Formula Shortage](#) (This site is also available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, and Navajo)

[Perrigo Pediatrics Store Brand Infant Formula Quick Guide](#)

USDA Food and Nutrition Service

[Request for Additional WIC Flexibility in Response to the Impact of COVID-19 and 2022 Abbott Recall on Nationwide Infant Formula Supply Chain Issues for Infants in Food Packages I and II – Maximum Monthly Allowance](#)

WIC

[WIC Infant Formula Recall Waivers](#)

International Lactation Consultant Association

[ILCA'S Statement on Commercial Infant Mild Formula Shortage](#)

United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC)

[Infant Formula Recall and Shortage: Resources](#)

[The Four Pillars of Infant Nutrition Security in the United States](#)

[Abbott Formula Supply Updates](#)

[Advocacy Letter to Congress on Formula Shortage](#)



Community Resources

Breastfeeding support is provided for WIC participants from peer counselors and certified lactation consultants through in-person, virtual consultations, and group classes. WIC offers free access to video visits with a certified lactation consultant 24/7 through the Pacify app. Download the Pacify app from [iPhone app store](#) or [Google Play app store](#) (small annual fee).

- [Find a Lactation consultant](#)
- [Find an accredited milk bank](#)