

Information for families having difficulty finding formula

Babies need the right mix of nutrients to stay healthy, and these nutrients are found in human breast milk and in formula approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). As parents and caregivers across the nation struggle to find formula, your baby's health depends on using products that meet federal standards and are prepared according to directions on the label. During this stressful time, the California Department of Public Health and the American Academy of Pediatrics offer tips to keep your baby safe.

How to find formula

- Shop at different times of the day. Stores get shipments at different times of the day, so the shelves may be empty in the morning and stocked in the evening.
- Have family and friends help you to find supplies to avoid making multiple trips to stores, food banks, or other community-based formula resources.
- Check with your health care provider if your baby needs premature or therapeutic formula. They may have supplies on hand or other suggestions to help.
- Call your local WIC office for help. If you are eligible for WIC, the local WIC office can help get you enrolled and provide any assistance they can with formula.
- Call 2-1-1 to get connected to local resources or visit www.211.org.
- Consider using human milk from one of the following certified human milk banks: www.hmbana.org and www.wakemed.org care-and-services/womens-support-for-baby-mothers-milk-bank .

Babies not on therapeutic or specialty formula usually tolerate changing from one brand to another

- Use a different formula. Some formula is now available in stores that is made outside of the U.S., but is still FDA approved.
- Remember to mix formula safely using the directions on the label. Always add the right amount of water. Adding too much water or too little formula is dangerous. Diluted formula can lead to imbalances in minerals like sodium which can harm nerve and brain function.
- Wash your hands, equipment, and surfaces before preparing the formula. Harmful bacteria can make babies sick if hands and preparation areas are not clean.
- Do not use formula after the "use by" expiration date. This date guarantees the safety, nutrient content, and quality of the formula.

Pasteurized whole cow's milk can be an alternative for some children

- Cow's milk is NOT recommended for babies under 6 months old and it is not recommended for babies on specialty formulas to use cow's milk.
- If your baby is 6 months or older you may consider using cow's milk for a few days until you can find formula or reach your health care provider. Using cow's milk longer than a week can have health risks for your baby.
- Most infants do not transition to cow's milk before their first birthday, but some could transition sooner at 10 or 11 months. Talk to your health care provider about this option.



