

Feeding your baby formula

Safely making and storing formula

Human milk (breast milk) is the only food a baby needs for the first 6 months of life. It's recommended that babies continue to be offered human milk until 2 years of age or older.

Parents may give their baby formula for a number of reasons. If offering infant formula, it's important to prepare and store it safely.

What are the different types of infant formula?

There are 3 types of store-bought formula: ready-to-feed, liquid concentrate and powdered. Ready-to-feed and liquid concentrate are sterile (free from germs) until they are opened. Powdered formula is not sterile.

How do I wash and disinfect the bottles and equipment to make formula?

Every time you make formula, wash, then disinfect the bottles and equipment. Disinfect means to kill any germs that could make your baby sick. Disinfect bottles and equipment for babies of any age.

First Wash:

1. Gather the feeding equipment such as bottles, tongs, spoons and a liquid measuring cup
2. Wash your hands, sink and work area with soap and warm water. Dry with a clean towel
3. Wash all equipment in hot, soapy water. Scrub the inside of the bottles and nipples using a bottle brush that is only used for your baby's feeding equipment
4. Rinse everything in hot water

Then Disinfect:

1. Place the clean supplies in a large pot
2. Fill the pot with water until everything is covered with water. Do not cover the pot
3. Bring the water to a boil and boil for 2 minutes
4. Use disinfected tongs to remove all items from the pot onto a clean towel. Shake off any excess water and let air dry

5. If not using right away, cover and store in a clean place. Do not touch the inside of any equipment that can be in contact with the formula

If you use a home sterilizer system to disinfect, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Dishwashers do not disinfect.

How do I make and store ready-to-feed formula?

1. Shake the container well
2. Pour the amount you think your baby will drink into a clean, disinfected bottle. Do not add water
3. Attach a clean, disinfected nipple and feed right away. Once you start feeding, use the bottle within 2 hours. Throw out any leftover formula

Store unopened ready-to-feed formula in a cool, dry place. Recap opened containers and store in the fridge. Throw containers out after 48 hours or follow label instructions.

How do I make and store liquid concentrate formula?

1. Add cold tap water to a kettle or pot and bring to a boil. Keep at a boil for 2 minutes
2. Let the water cool to between room and body temperature
3. Wash the top of the liquid concentrate container with hot water and soap
4. Shake the container well and open with a disinfected can opener if needed
5. Measure and mix the water and formula together, following the instructions on the label. Use right away. Once you start feeding, use the bottle within 2 hours. Throw out any leftover formula

If you make more than one bottle, store extra in the fridge and use within 24 hours or follow label instructions.

Store unopened containers in a cool, dry place. Cover or close opened containers and store in the fridge. Throw out after 48 hours or follow label instructions.

To safely store infant formula, your fridge must be 4°C (39°F) or cooler. If you're not sure, use a fridge thermometer. Never freeze formula as this can change nutrient levels.

How do I make and store powdered formula?

The safest way to make powdered formula is to follow these steps:

1. Add cold tap water to a kettle or pot and bring to a boil. Keep at a boil for 2 minutes
2. Let the water cool, but do not let the temperature go below 70°C (158°F). The water needs to be hot enough to kill harmful germs that may be in the powder. Check with a food thermometer
3. Measure and mix the water and formula together, following the instructions on the label. Check each powdered formula label as some newer brands have different mixing instructions
4. Cool the formula to between room and body temperature and use right away. Once you start feeding, use the bottle within 2 hours. Throw out any leftover formula

For healthy full-term infants, powdered infant formula can be prepared one bottle at a time with water that was previously boiled and cooled to room temperature. Use right away.

If you make more than one bottle, quickly cool any bottles you want to use later. Put bottles under cold running water or in a bowl filled with cold water and ice. Store in the fridge and use within 24 hours.

Infant formula machines are not recommended for powdered formula because they may not keep water at a safe temperature.

Store powdered formula containers in a cool, dry place. If the container has been opened, make sure the lid is tightly closed. Do not store open containers in the fridge. After a container is open, use the formula within one month and before the expiration date. To help you remember, write the date on the lid when you first open the container.

How do I get formula to the right temperature to feed my baby?

Formula is safe to feed your baby if it feels cool or slightly warm, but not hot. To test the temperature, shake the bottle 1 to 2 times, then pour a few drops on the inside of your wrist.

If the formula is too hot, cool it by putting the bottle under cold running water or in a bowl filled with water and ice. Do not get tap water on the nipple or ring of the bottle.

Formula stored in the fridge can be fed to your baby right out of the fridge or warmed.

To warm formula, put the bottle in a bottle warmer or in a bowl of hot water for no more than 15 minutes. Shake the bottle a few times during warming. Do not get tap water on the nipple or ring.

Do not warm formula in a microwave. Microwaves heat unevenly and create hot spots. Hot spots in the formula could burn your baby's mouth.

Do not reheat formula during a feed. Do not refrigerate a partly used bottle.

How can I feed my baby away from home?

If you plan to be away for 2 hours or less, put prepared formula in an insulated bag or cooler with an ice pack. Use the formula within 2 hours.

If you plan to be away from home for longer than 2 hours, the safest option is to bring unopened ready-to-feed formula with you.

For more information

- [HealthLinkBC File #69a Feeding your baby formula: Before you start](#)
- [Infant formula: What you need to know](#)

If you have questions about feeding your baby, contact your health care provider, a public health nurse or a lactation consultant. You can also call HealthLinkBC at **8-1-1** to speak with a registered nurse or registered dietitian.