

Baby Formula Shortage FAQ and Resources

The shortage of baby formula was caused by limited supply and a large formula maker's temporary shutdown.

Safety tips to help during the formula shortage :

- Contact Our Special Needs Unit for help finding resources for baby formula at 1-855-346-9828.
- **You should not water down formula, try to make formula at home, or use toddler formula to feed infants.**
- Discard formula if it is expired, not consumed within 2 hours of preparation, or within 1 hour from when the feeding begins.
- **WIC-Eligible Families:** Contact your local WIC office to get more sources of infant formula nearby or visit (<https://www.signupwic.com>). WIC is allowing stores to replace the required brands (see list below or contact your local WIC office for a full list) with others they can get:
Stores are allowed to offer certain substitutes if they do not have the assigned formula available, including some store brands and some other major formula brands - these substitutes may vary from store to store, and the list of allowable substitutions continues to grow as needs arise. WIC's substitutions are approved through August.
- Call your OB/GYN or pediatrician to see if they have in-office samples, or can suggest a similar formula that may be more readily available in stores and is nutritionally similar to your infant's typical formula.
- Reach out to your local churches and food pantries to see if they have formula that is the same as what you currently feed your baby.
- The USDA and Abbott are advising to not throw out recalled formula. You should return it to the store it was bought at for a refund or exchange. You can also call the company at 1-800-986-8540 for assistance. Check your formula's lot code: (<https://www.similacrecall.com/us/en/product-lookup.html>) to see whether or not it was affected by the recall. (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Is-Homemade-Baby-Formula-Safe.aspx>)
- Contact the American Academy of Pediatrics office to find or get more sources of infant formula nearby. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Are-there-shortages-of-infant-formula-due-to-COVID-19.aspx>

Additional Tips :

- If you are a **Mother-To-Be** in your 3rd trimester, consider breast feeding. Our Special Needs Unit can help you find a breast-feeding consultant after delivery.
- Check smaller stores and drug stores, which may not be out of supply when the bigger stores are.
- If you can afford it, buy formula online until store shortages ease. Purchase from well-known sources and pharmacies rather than those sold on auction sites.
- **Do not import formula from overseas, since imported formula is not FDA reviewed.**
- Aetna provides breast pumps to every mom who wants to breast feed and pump. Breastfeeding is good for the baby, and it is free.

Frequently asked formula questions :

IMPORTANT: Be sure to contact your child's pediatrician with any questions, formula questions, and before making any formula substitutions.

With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any?

Visit : <https://healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Are-there-shortages-of-infant-formula-due-to-COVID-19.aspx>

Check social media groups. There are groups dedicated to infant feeding and formula. Members may have ideas for where to find formula. **Make sure to check any advice with your pediatrician.**

Is it OK to put more water in baby formula?

No. While it may be tempting to water down formula to stretch it out, **it is not safe** to do that. Always follow label instructions or those given to you by your pediatrician. Watering down formula is dangerous. It can cause nutritional imbalances in your baby and lead to serious health problems. Always mix formula as directed by the manufacturer.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/How-to-Safely-Prepare-Formula-with-Water.aspx>

Can I make my own baby formula?

The AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) strongly advises **against** homemade formula. Recipes for homemade formulas on the internet may seem healthy or less expensive. They are not safe and do not meet your baby's nutritional needs. Infant deaths have been reported from use of some homemade formulas.

Is it OK to switch to another formula such as a store brand?

For most babies, it is OK to switch to another similar formula, including store brands, however, if you have questions or if your baby is on a specific formula, ask your pediatrician about what formula to use. (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Choosing-an-Infant-Formula.aspx>)

Can toddler formula substitute for regular formula?

Toddler formulas or drinks are not for infant use. But, if you have no other choice, toddler formula is safe for a few days for babies who are close to a year of age. **Talk with your pediatrician before using toddler formula as a substitute.**

Is cow's milk a safe alternative to baby formula?

Talk with your child's doctor as this may be an option if your child is 6-12 months and is usually on a regular formula (not a specialty product for allergies or other special health needs). Pasteurized (not raw) whole unflavored cow's milk should only be given for a short time—no more than a week. Your doctor can tell you how many ounces of cow's milk your child should be drinking. This is not ideal and should not become routine, but is a better option than diluting formula or making homemade formula.

The most important concern with giving an infant over 6 months of age cow's milk is making sure they get enough iron to prevent anemia. Be sure to include plenty of iron-containing solid foods in their diet while you are using whole cow's milk. Also, talk to your pediatrician about the need for an iron supplement while using whole cow's milk.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Anemia-and-Your-Child.aspx>

Can I use plant-based milk instead of baby formula if needed?

Always check with your pediatrician first. Plant-based milk alternatives are not recommended for babies under a year of age or infants with certain medical conditions requiring specialized formulas. Soy milk may be an option to give babies who are close to a year of age for a few days (no more than one week) in an emergency. If you and your pediatrician agree to use soy milk, buy the kind that is fortified with vitamin D and calcium. Talk with your pediatrician if you are considering using plant-based milk.

<https://healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/are-there-shortages-of-infant-formula-due-to-COVID-19.aspx>

Be especially careful to avoid almond milk or other plant milks as these are often low in protein and minerals.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/milk-allergy-foods-and-ingredients-to-avoid.aspx>

Make sure to change back to formula soon as some is available.

What is the shelf life of baby formula?

Check the "use by" date on infant formula, which is required by the FDA to be on each container. Do not use the formula after the "use by" date as the nutrient content goes down after that date. Store unopened infant formula containers in a cool, dry, indoor place—not in vehicles, garages, or outdoors. Once a container of infant formula is opened, store in a cool, dry place with the lid tightly closed. Check the label on the container as most infant formula needs to be used within 1 month of opening.

Until that declared date, the formula will contain no less than the amount of each nutrient on the product label and will otherwise be of acceptable quality.

To help ease the impact of shortages, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises buying no more than a 10-day to 2-week supply of formula

Additional resources:

- **Aetna Better Health Community Resource Tool** <https://aetna-pa.findhelp.com/>
- Locate your nearest **Community Action Agency (CAA)**. Your neighborhood CAA may be able to provide you with formula or connect you with local agencies that have formula in stock.
- **United Way's 2-1-1** (<https://www.211.org/about-us/your-local-211>) or dial 211.
- **WIC-Eligible Families:** Contact your local WIC office (<https://www.signupwic.com/>)
- **Feeding America** (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>)
- **Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA)** (<https://www.hmbana.org/find-a-milk-bank/>)
HMBANA: certain HMBANA-accredited milk banks are distributing donated breast milk to mothers in need; please note that some may require a prescription from a medical professional. Accredited milk banks can be found at the HMBANA website above.
- **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services**
Fact Sheet: Helping Families Find Formula During the Infant Formula Shortage
<https://www.hhs.gov/formula/index.html>

Alternate Formula Brands:

Please check the following link for alternative formulas, pricing can change frequently. <https://naspghan.org/recent-news/naspghan-tools-for-hcps-affected-by-formula-recall/>

Rite-Aid Tugaboos Infant Formula Produced by Perrigo Nutrition, this store-brand formula is similar to Member's Mark Infant, Target's Up & Up Infant, and other Infant store brand formulas. It contains protein from nonfat milk and added whey, and lactose as the sole carbohydrate (making this formula's protein close to 60% whey and 40% casein).

ByHeart This is the only whole-milk-based formula available in the U.S., and so far, the company reports that while they've had a tremendous increase in demand, they may still have product available. Visit the ByHeart website at <https://byheart.com/products/whole-nutrition-formula>. If they are out of formula, you can join their waitlist.

Alternative Options

Liquid (ready-to-feed) formulas Liquid (ready-to-feed) formulas don't need to be mixed with water before feeding, but they are more expensive than powdered versions. Be sure to read and follow the label's instructions about where to store it and how long you can use it after it's been opened.

Similac Advance Infant Formula with Iron. This traditional formula has lactose as the carbohydrate; lycopene; galactooligosaccharides; protein from nonfat milk and is 48% whey and 52% casein.

Similac Alimentum Hypoallergenic Infant Formula This is a specialized hypoallergenic formula for babies with certain medical needs. The ready-to-feed version of Similac Alimentum was not subject to the February recall.

Formula Manufacturer Hotlines:

Gerber's My Gerber Baby Expert: reach a certified nutrition or lactation consultant by phone, text, Facebook Messenger, web chat, or video call, who can help you identify a similar formula that may be more readily available (<https://www.gerber.com/mygerber-baby-expert>)

Abbott's Consumer Hotline: Call 1-800-986-8540

Abbott's urgent product request line: ask your OB/GYN or your infant's pediatrician to submit an urgent product request by downloading and completing the form - PDF (<https://abbottnutrition.com/metabolics>)