

Formula Feeding Your Baby Safely Preparing and Storing Formula

Breast milk is the best choice for babies. For babies who cannot be breastfed or fed donor breast milk, commercial infant formula is recommended. If your baby is formula fed, you must be careful to safely prepare and store the formula. If not, your baby can get sick.

How do you clean bottles and equipment used to make formula?

- Wash your hands well with soap and warm water.
- Use only clean bottles and equipment to prepare formula.
- Wash bottles, including artificial nipples, rings, caps and equipment for preparing formula, in hot soapy water. Use a long brush to scrub inside the bottles and nipples. Wash by hand, rinse well and air dry, or wash equipment in the dishwasher.
- After washing, boil the bottles, artificial nipples, rings, caps and tongs in a clean, uncovered pot for five minutes. Boil the mixing container and mixing spoon. Boiling the equipment used to prepare formula makes it less likely that your baby will get germs that can cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Over time artificial nipples may become worn. Check nipples often and throw away any that are cracked, sticky, or torn.

- Using tongs, remove bottle parts from the water and fit artificial nipples, caps, and rings together. Place the nipple on the inside of the bottle for storage.
- If using a disposable bottle system, you will need to wash all the parts, and then boil the artificial nipples and caps. New liners are clean and ready to use.
- Wipe clean the tops of cans and the blade of your can opener before opening cans.

How do you prepare formula safely?

Water used for mixing formula must be boiled in a clean open pot for 2 minutes and cooled with the lid on. This applies to tap water, bottled water, home-filtered water and well water.

If you have concerns about your water supply or if you use well water, check with your local public health unit about using this water for your baby. Well water should also be checked for nitrates, as boiling does not remove nitrates. If your well water is high in nitrates use an alternate water source. It is important to follow all public system 'boil water' advisories or notices in your area.

Mix the formula following the directions on the label. It is important for your baby's health to add the right amount of water.

- *Ready-to-use formula:* **Do not** add water. Pour the formula into bottles and cap them.
- *Concentrated liquid formula:* Measure the concentrate formula into a clean measuring cup and add an equal amount of cool boiled water. Mix gently. Pour the formula into bottles and cap them.
- *Powder formula:* Measure the correct amount of cooled boiled water into a clean container. Use the scoop from inside the can. Level each scoop with a clean knife. Measure and add the correct amount of powder and mix gently. Pour the formula into bottles and cap them.

Read and carefully follow the directions on how to make and store formula. Powder infant formula is not sterile and in rare cases has made babies sick. If your baby is **younger than 1 month old, premature, or ill**, use powdered formula only under your doctor's instruction. Otherwise use liquid formula, which is sterile until the container is opened.

How do you store formula safely?

Follow the storage instructions on your baby's formula tin. If there are no instructions, use the following guidelines:

- Store prepared formula in the fridge until ready to serve. Use an ice pack and insulated container when you go out.
- Throw out any *unused* prepared formula that has been at room temperature for 2 or more hours.
- If formula has been warmed up or partly *used for a feed*, throw it out after 1 hour. Do not put in the fridge to re-use again.

Powder formula and formula prepared from powder:

- Store formula *powder* in a cool, dry place (not in the fridge). Make sure the lid is tightly closed. Check the expiry date and make sure you use it within one month after opening.
- Keep formula *prepared from powder* in the fridge for no longer than 24 hours.

Ready-to-use and concentrated liquid formula:

- Keep opened cans of concentrated and ready-to-use formula in the fridge. Cover them with a plastic cap or wrap. Throw out after 48 hours.
- Keep *ready-to-use* formula that has been put in bottles in the fridge for no longer than 48 hours.
- Keep formula prepared from *concentrated liquid* in the fridge for no longer than 48 hours.

Check that your fridge temperature is below 4 degrees C or 40 degrees F

Should you warm formula before feeding it to your baby?

- Formula can be given cool or at body temperature (warm). Your baby will let you know what she prefers.

- Warm formula by:
 - running the bottle under warm tap water (keep the nipple area out of the water); or
 - standing the bottle in a bowl of warm water.
- **Do not** heat formula on top of the stove. It can get too hot too fast.
- **Do not** microwave formula because the uneven heating can burn your baby's mouth.
- Always test a drop of heated formula on your wrist. It should feel just warm.

For more information, see the following BC HealthFiles:

[#69a Formula Feeding Your Baby: Getting Started](#)

[#69c Baby's First Foods](#)

[#19a Infant Dental Care](#)

For more information, contact your local public health nurse, community nutritionist, or Dial-A-Dietitian at 604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-3438 to speak to a registered dietitian.



For more BC HealthFile topics visit www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm, or visit your local public health unit.

Call the BC NurseLine to speak to a registered nurse, available 24-hours every day:

- In Greater Vancouver, call 604-215-4700
- In BC, call toll-free 1-866-215-4700
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