

Formula Feeding

Deciding how to feed your baby isn't always easy. Sometimes, for medical or personal reasons, store-bought infant formula is used instead of or in addition to, human milk. You should feel safe and supported to make an informed feeding decision about feeding your baby (see [Deciding How to Feed Your Baby](#) in the appendix).

Make an Informed Choice

Make sure you have all the information you need to make an informed choice. Contact your health care provider or a public health nurse or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. They can talk with you about the benefits, risks and costs of each option. And if you decide to use formula, they can help you choose the type that's best for your baby.

If you are hoping to return to breastfeeding or chestfeeding, contact your health care provider or a lactation consultant to help put in place plans and supports to achieve your feeding goals.



DID YOU KNOW?

The World Health Organization, Health Canada, Dietitians of Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the B.C. Ministry of Health all recommend that babies be fed only human milk for the first 6 months. After your baby is eating solid family foods, human milk remains an important source of nutrition. If possible, continue to breastfeed or chestfeed until your child is 2 years or older.

If You Use Formula

Breastfeed or chestfeed, too, if you can

Give your baby human milk whenever possible. If your baby is not exclusively receiving human milk, offer a store-bought infant formula until 9 to 12 months (see [Supplementing](#)).

If you're not currently breastfeeding or chestfeeding but hope to breastfeed or chestfeed your baby in the future, talk with your health care provider about how to keep up your milk supply. Or find a lactation consultant through the British Columbia Lactation Consultants Association (bclca.wildapricot.org/).

Use formula safely

To learn how to prepare, store and feed formula safely, talk with your health care provider or a public health nurse, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 or see the HLBC File: Feeding Your Baby Formula: Safely Making and Storing Formula at healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/feeding-your-baby-formula-safely-making-and-storing-formula

Health Canada inspects all store-bought infant formulas for safety and nutrition. But it's possible for formula to come into contact with bacteria or to be missing an ingredient. To check for product recalls, visit recalls-rappels.canada.ca/en.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Although human milk is best, sometimes formula is necessary. If you need to use formula but feel uncomfortable or guilty about doing so, discuss with your health care provider. And remember that no matter how you feed your baby, you can use feeding times to build a close and loving bond with your child.



DANGER

If you use infant formula, choose only store-bought cow's milk-based varieties (or store-bought soy-based formula, if your child can't have cow's milk-based). Other beverages don't provide the nutrition your baby needs.

Never use these in place of infant formula:

- ✗ evaporated or condensed milk
- ✗ regular cow's milk, goat's milk or other animal milks (these can be introduced after 9 to 12 months but should not replace formula or human milk)
- ✗ nut "milks," like almond, cashew and coconut drinks
- ✗ other "milks," like rice, oat, potato, soy and hemp drinks
- ✗ homemade formula



BE AWARE

Using a home machine to prepare infant formula can be unsafe. The machine may not heat the water enough to kill any bacteria the formula might contain, and it may not dispense the right amount of powder. The safest way to make powdered formula is to use boiled water cooled to 70°C.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Safe drinking water is water that is safe to drink and fit for household use without further treatment. Choose a reliable water source that is intended for drinking water and that has been tested safe for coliform bacteria, lead and nitrate levels. If there is no safe drinking water source, use bottled water and boil it.



BE AWARE

Boiling won't get rid of dangerous chemicals in water and may instead make them more concentrated.

Ensure your water is safe for making formula

In most B.C. communities, drinking water is typically treated at a water treatment plant so that it is safe to drink at the tap. If you have your own water source (for example, a private well) you should test your drinking water regularly. For more information on well water testing, see: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/well-water-testing.

Some buildings have plumbing that contains lead. In some situations, lead can leach from plumbing and into drinking water at the tap which can cause a health impact for infants and children. For more information on lead in drinking water, see: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water

Be sure that your water is safe before using it to make infant formula. When preparing formula, do not use:

- ✗ water from the hot side of the tap
- ✗ discoloured water that hasn't been tested
- ✗ specialty nursery or baby waters
- ✗ carbonated or flavoured waters
- ✗ water known to contain high levels of nitrate, fluoride, sodium, lead, manganese or bluegreen algae (cyanobacteria)

If you don't have access to safe water or are unsure of whether it is safe, use ready-to-feed liquid formula or make powdered formula using bottled water.

If you have questions or concerns about your drinking water contact your local health unit, health authority or your First Nations government office. Visit gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/health-authority-contacts