

*How to Feed Your Baby with*  
**Infant Formula**

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*How to Feed Your Baby with*

# **Infant Formula**



# How to Feed Your Baby with Infant Formula

The information in this book is accurate and up-to-date as of the date of printing.

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# *How to Feed Your Baby with* **Infant Formula**

## ***How to Feed Your Baby with Infant Formula***

has been developed for parents who have made an informed decision to feed their baby with infant formula, either using formula alone or in combination with breastmilk. It tells you what you need to know to feed your baby as safely as possible.

This booklet is most useful to parents of healthy, full-term babies. If your baby is premature or has special needs, talk to your health care provider.

### **Infant formula product recalls and alerts:**

[inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/  
newsroom/food-recall-warnings/  
eng/1299076382077/1299076493846](https://inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/food-recall-warnings/eng/1299076382077/1299076493846)



**He or she?**

In this book, we take turns using “he” or “she.” Please know that whichever word we use, the information applies to both boys and girls.

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## About formula

How do I choose a formula? .....2

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## How do I choose a formula?

Choosing a formula can be a difficult decision. There are many kinds of formula and many things to think about. For example, you need to consider things like:

- What your baby needs
- The costs of the different brands and types of formula
- What's available in stores where you live
- Whether you have a safe water supply
- The amount of time and effort different kinds of formula take to prepare

Don't choose a formula based on advertising. The law requires that all **brands** of regular infant formula have the same basic ingredients. This means that while there may be small differences among brands, they are all pretty much the same.

However, there are different **types** of formula—for example, cow milk-protein based, lactose-free, or soy-based.

Check with your health care provider if you have any questions about formula.

## Health care provider

In this book we use the term “health care provider” to mean any of a number of professionals who can help answer your questions about infant formula. These include:

- Dentists
- Doctors
- Midwives
- Nurses
- Nurse Practitioners
- Pharmacists
- Registered dietitians

### CAUTION

This booklet tells you how to make powdered infant formula as safely as possible.

Babies are at higher risk for infection from powdered formula than from liquid formula. This is because powdered formula is not sterile. It can be contaminated with bacteria that can cause life-threatening infections.

**All babies are at risk for infection from powdered formula. However, for some babies, the risk is much higher:**

- Babies under two months of age
- Preterm or low birth weight babies
- Babies with weakened immune systems
- Babies whose mother is HIV positive

Talk to your health care provider before giving powdered formula to your baby.

## How much does formula cost?

The kinds of formula that you prepare by mixing with water will cost between about \$860 and \$1800 for your baby's first year of life. (These costs are based on prices in Nova Scotia in 2007.)

Ready-to-use formulas are much more costly—about \$4560 for a year's supply.

In some areas of the province, well water is not safe to use for mixing formula. If your well water is unsafe, you'll need to find another source of water to mix formula. This could add to the cost. You'll find more information about safe water and water testing on page 19.

## How long will my baby need formula?

**Formula will be your baby's main source of nourishment for 9 to 12 months.** Starting at 9 months, you can begin to gradually replace formula with whole (3.25%) cow milk. For example, you can give your baby cow milk in a cup with meals and continue using formula for regular feedings. By 12 months, your baby can be drinking whole cow milk and won't need formula any longer.

Your baby will be ready to start family foods at 6 months. You'll find information on feeding your baby in **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health Services office.

### CAUTION

**If you are feeding your baby soy-based formula, he'll need to continue using it for the first two years.**

Soy-based formula is different from soy milk. **Do not** switch your baby from soy-based formula to soy milk without checking with your health care provider.

If your family uses soy milk or other alternatives in place of cow milk, talk with a registered dietitian before you give these to your baby.



# How to prepare and store formula

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## Safety is very important

The messages in this book are based on what the most recent research tells us is safest for your baby.

Some of these messages are new and may be different from what other people tell you. They may be different from the way you've prepared formula for other babies. However, they are based on the most up-to-date information we can find.

Follow the directions for sterilizing equipment and preparing formula carefully. **If there is a difference between the directions in this booklet and on the container of formula you are using, follow the most cautious directions.**

Your baby's health depends on the care you take.

### Double Check

You need clean, safe water to prepare formula.

Until your baby is 6 months old, **all** water used to make formula must be boiled.

It's not safe to use well water to prepare formula unless it has been tested. You'll find information on how to be sure your well water is safe on page 19.

### CAUTION

It's not safe to mix **any** other kind of food or drink with the formula in your baby's bottle.

This includes cereal.

Adding cereal to your baby's bottle won't help him sleep and giving cereal in a bottle can cause choking.

## What you'll need to prepare formula

**Everything you use to prepare formula must be able to be boiled.**

- **Bottles:** You can use either bottles or disposable bottle liners.  
***If you use bottles, you'll need:***
  - 6 to 8 bottles with caps and screw-on rings
  - 10 to 12 nipples***If you use disposable liners, you'll need:***
  - 6 to 8 bottle holders with rims, caps, and nipples
  - Disposable bottle liners
- **A bottle brush and a nipple brush**
- **A glass measuring cup and a can opener**
- For powdered formula, you'll also need **a knife** (for leveling the powder in the scoop) **and a fork** (for mixing).
- **A large pot with a lid**
- **Kitchen tongs**
- **An ice pack and insulated bag or a cooler** to keep bottles of prepared formula cold when away from home.

### ***Added info...***

No matter what kind of nipple you use, you'll need to replace them when they change colour or become sticky or cracked.

## How to sterilize

Until your baby is 6 months old, sterilize **everything** you use to prepare formula each time you make it. This includes things like the measuring cup, can opener and tongs, as well as bottles and nipples.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry them with a clean or disposable cloth.
2. Wash all parts of the bottles (except disposable liners) in hot soapy water. Wash everything else you'll be using. Rinse well.
3. Put everything in a large pot and cover with water. Put the lid on the pot.
4. Bring to a boil. Boil for at least 2 minutes.
5. Remove from heat. Cool. Leave everything in the pot with the lid on until you're ready to fill the bottles.
6. When you're ready to fill the bottles, use sterilized tongs to take everything out of the pot. Drain on a clean dishtowel or paper towel.

After 6 months, you don't need to sterilize. Continue to wash your hands and to wash everything you use to prepare formula in hot, soapy water. Rinse well.

### Added info...

Washing and boiling your baby's bottles, nipples, and everything else you use to prepare formula is important. This makes it less likely that your baby will come in contact with the germs that cause diarrhea and vomiting. Diarrhea and vomiting can cause dehydration and make your baby very sick.

As well as sterilizing your equipment, you also need a clean space to prepare your baby's formula.

Before you mix formula, wash the counter where you'll be working with soap and water. Then sanitize it with a purchased disinfectant spray or a solution of bleach and water.

If you are using a purchased spray, follow the directions carefully. Be sure to leave it on the counter long enough for it to do its job.

To make a bleach solution, mix:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach
- 1 litre of water

Put the mixture in a spray bottle.

**To use** the bleach solution:

- Spray on the counter.
- Let stand for 3 minutes.
- Wipe up with a clean paper towel wrung out with cold water.
- Pat dry with clean paper towels or let the counter air dry.

Bleach solutions can become less effective over time. Make a new batch every day.



## How to prepare formula

There are many different kinds of formula and they often have different directions for measuring and mixing.

The safest way to prepare formula for your baby is to **follow the measuring directions on the formula container exactly.**

Check the inside of the label for detailed instructions on measuring the amount of formula and water to use. If you do not use the correct amounts of water and formula, your baby could get very sick or not grow properly.

**Check the expiry date on the package before you purchase or use formula.** Do not give your baby formula that is past its expiry date.

### CAUTION

#### **Keep bottles of formula cold.**

If you are going out with your baby, you need to keep bottles cold until you use them. Always keep prepared bottles in an insulated bag or cooler with an ice pack.

Use bottles within 2 hours of putting them in the insulated bag or cooler.

## Ready-to-use formula

Ready-to-use formula doesn't need to be mixed. Each container will make 1 or 2 bottles, depending on how much your baby takes at each feeding.

Until your baby is 6 months old, follow the directions for sterilizing your equipment and cleaning your workspace on pages 10-11.

### How to store prepared bottles \_\_\_\_\_

- Store the filled bottles in the refrigerator.
- Use them within 24 to 48 hours, following the directions on the container. After this, don't give them to your baby. Prepare fresh bottles.

### How to store opened formula containers \_\_\_\_\_

- Cover opened container tightly and store in the refrigerator.
- Use within 24 to 48 hours, following the directions on the container.



## Liquid concentrate formula

### How much to mix at one time \_\_\_\_\_

- You can prepare a day's supply of bottles at one time.

### How to prepare \_\_\_\_\_

- Until your baby is 6 months old, follow the directions for sterilizing your equipment and cleaning your workspace on pages 10-11.
- Follow the directions on the container for how much formula and water to use. Use a measuring cup, not a bottle, to measure liquids. The measurements on bottles aren't always accurate.

- **Until your baby is 6 months old**, mix formula with water that has been boiled for at least 1 minute and then cooled. Both tap and bottled water must be boiled. If you are using well water, continue to use boiled water for as long as you give your baby formula.

**Remember:** Well water must be tested for bacteria and chemical content. For more information, see page 19.

### How to store prepared bottles \_\_\_\_\_

- Store the filled bottles in the refrigerator.
- Use them within 24 to 48 hours, following the directions on the container. After this, don't give them to your baby. Prepare fresh bottles.

### How to store opened formula containers \_\_\_\_\_

- Cover opened container tightly and store in the refrigerator.
- Use within 24 to 48 hours, following the directions on the container.

## Powdered formula

### CAUTION

This booklet tells you how to make powdered infant formula as safely as possible.

Babies are at higher risk for infection from powdered formula than from liquid formula. This is because powdered formula is not sterile. It can be contaminated with bacteria that can cause life-threatening infections.

**All babies are at risk for infection from powdered formula. However, for some babies, the risk is much higher:**

- Babies under two months of age
- Preterm or low birth weight babies
- Babies with weakened immune systems
- Babies whose mother is HIV positive

Talk to your health care provider before giving powdered formula to your baby.

### How much to mix at one time

- **When using powdered formula, it's safest to prepare only 1 bottle at a time.** This is because powdered formula can't be sterilized and may contain a small amount of bacteria. Once powdered formula is mixed, these germs can grow in the liquid and can make your baby sick. It's safest to use powdered formula right after it's mixed.

However, if you need to prepare more than one bottle at a time, you'll find directions on page 17.

## CAUTION

**It is necessary to prepare water carefully before you mix it with powdered infant formula.** This includes well, tap, and bottled water.

**Always use hot water to mix powdered formula**—no less than 70°C (158°F). The water must be hot when you mix it with the powdered formula in order to kill any germs the powdered formula may contain.

### To prepare the water:

- Boil at least 1 litre of water for 1 minute. Let it cool at room temperature for no more than 15 to 20 minutes before use.
- If you have a cooking thermometer, use it to check the water temperature to be sure that it is at least 70°C (158°F).
- If you don't have a cooking thermometer, the water will be hot enough to kill germs if it has cooled at room temperature (on the counter top) for no more than 15 to 20 minutes.

If you are unable to boil water—for example, if there is a power outage or you are travelling—prepare single bottles and feed your baby immediately. Throw away any formula your baby doesn't use.

**Remember:** Well water must be tested for bacteria, chemical, and mineral content. For more information, see page 19.

## How to prepare one bottle

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- Follow the directions for sterilizing your equipment and cleaning your workspace on pages 10-11. This includes sterilizing the scoop that comes with the powdered formula. Don't leave the scoop in the container. Wash and sterilize it before each use.
- Follow the directions on the container for how much formula and water to use. Use a measuring cup, not a bottle, to measure the water. The measurements on bottles aren't always accurate. Use the scoop that comes with the powdered formula to measure the formula.
- Mix the formula with water that is at least 70°C (158°F). (See the Caution Box on page 16 for directions on preparing water.)
- Cool the prepared bottle quickly with cold water or an ice bath. Make sure the cold water does not touch the top of the bottle. This is because tap water isn't sterile and could leak into the bottle.
- Feed your baby as soon as the bottle is ready.

## How to prepare more than one bottle at a time:

- Follow the directions for sterilizing your equipment and cleaning your workspace on pages 10-11. This includes sterilizing the scoop that comes with the powdered formula. Don't leave the scoop in the container. Wash and sterilize it before each use.
- Follow the directions on the container for how much formula and water to use. Use a measuring cup, not a bottle, to measure water. The measurements on bottles aren't always accurate. Use the scoop that comes with the powdered formula to measure the formula.



- Mix the formula with water that is at least 70°C (158°F). (See the Caution Box on page 16 for directions on preparing water.)
- Cool the prepared bottles quickly with cold water or an ice bath. Make sure the cold water does not touch the top of the bottle. This is because tap water isn't sterile and could leak into the bottle.

### How to store prepared bottles \_\_\_\_\_

- Put the filled and cooled bottles in the refrigerator right away. Use them within 24 hours. After this, throw away any unused formula.

### How to store opened formula containers \_\_\_\_\_

- Cover opened containers of powdered formula tightly and store in a cool, dry place off the floor.
- Use powdered formula within 1 month after you open the container or before the expiry date, whichever comes first. When you open a container, label it with the date.

#### **Added info...**

If you are mixing formula to feed your baby right away, you can use water you have boiled in advance **UNLESS your baby is at greater risk:**

- Under two months of age
- Preterm or low birth weight
- Has a weakened immune system
- Mother is HIV positive

You can store boiled water at room temperature in a covered sterilized container for up to 24 hours.

## Be sure your well water is safe

In order for your baby's formula to be safe, the water you use to make it must also be safe.

**The Nova Scotia Department of Environment recommends that your well water be tested every 6 months for bacteria and every 2 years for chemical content.** A good time to test your well water is after snowmelt in the spring. You may also need to test your well water after a flood.

Well water can have high levels of chemicals and minerals—like nitrates, nitrites, arsenic, fluoride, uranium, or lead. It can also contain high levels of bacteria. Bacteria, chemicals, and minerals can all harm babies. Bacteria can be removed by boiling the water, but minerals and chemicals cannot.

If testing shows that your well water is unsafe, you have several choices. You can:

- Treat the water to make it safe
- Find a source of safe water—like a neighbour's well that has been tested and is safe
- Use bottled drinking water to mix formula.

If you can't test your well water, don't use it to make formula. Use bottled water or water from a tested well.

Many wells are safe, but you won't know about yours unless you have it tested. To find out what tests you need, how to do them, and what the results mean, contact the Department of Environment: 1-877-9ENVIRO (1-877-936-8476). To learn more about chemicals and minerals in well water, see **Your Well Water: Understanding Chemical Quality**. You'll find it at:

[novascotia.ca/nse/water/docs/wellwaterbooklet3.pdf](http://novascotia.ca/nse/water/docs/wellwaterbooklet3.pdf)

## CAUTION

It is not safe to use well water that has high levels of chemicals or minerals to mix formula, even if you boil it.

Boiling can lower the bacteria level of well water, but it will not lower the chemical or mineral content. In fact, boiling can make chemicals **more** concentrated. This can harm your baby.

Even if your well has been checked and shown to be safe, you should always boil well water before using it to mix formula. This is because the amount of bacteria in well water can change between tests.

Do not use water from roadside or natural springs. This water is not tested. It is not a safe water supply, especially for a baby.

## Lead

Whether you get your water from a well or a municipal water supply, if there is lead in your pipes, pumps, or plumbing, Health Canada recommends that you let your cold water tap run for about 5 minutes every morning—or just flush your toilet. This will flush out lead and copper that could build up in the water overnight.

Hot water will draw out more lead and other minerals that may be in your plumbing. Always use cold tap water for drinking, cooking, filling your kettle, and mixing formula.

Some municipalities in Nova Scotia keep track of which houses get their water through lead pipes. You can call your municipal water supply to see if they know whether your pipes are lead.





## Feeding your baby

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## How much formula does my baby need?

Babies come in different weights and lengths, but all babies have very tiny tummies!



A newborn baby's tummy is the size of a cherry.



By 3 or 4 days, a baby's tummy is the size of a walnut.



By 5 or 6 days, a baby's tummy is the size of an apricot.



By 1 to 3 weeks, a baby's tummy is the size of an egg.

*Information on 'Baby's Tummy Size' is adapted with permission from Best Start Resource Centre*

Babies' tummies can't hold much at one time, so they need to be fed often—day and night. Most newborn babies need to feed every 1 to 3 hours. Some babies need to feed many times during the night. Others may not need to feed as often.

How much formula your baby needs at each feeding will depend on her age and how active she's been.

All babies are different. They all take different amounts of formula. It's normal for a baby to want more or less formula than another baby.

Your baby may also take different amounts of formula from feeding to feeding. It's normal if your baby doesn't always want the same amount.

You don't need to set up a feeding schedule for your baby. Over time, every baby sets his own schedule. For example, a newborn takes very little at each feeding and may want to feed often. Over time, he'll slowly begin to take more at each feeding and to want to feed less often.

Follow your baby's cues. A feeding isn't an amount of formula or a length of time. A feeding starts when your baby shows you he's hungry. It ends when he shows you he's had enough. You'll find information on your baby's hunger and fullness cues on the next page.



## Feeding cues

Your baby has ways to let you know when she's hungry and when she's had enough. These are called "cues."

### **Your baby will tell you she's hungry by:**

- Holding her hands or fists over her chest
- Sucking on her fingers or fist
- Turning toward your body with her mouth open
- Smacking her lips
- Sticking out her tongue
- Making sucking sounds
- Crying

### **Your baby will tell you she's had enough by:**

- Turning away
- Closing her mouth
- Relaxing her hands and arms
- Falling asleep

**Don't force your baby to finish all the formula in a bottle.** Follow your baby's cues. Her cues will let you know when she's hungry and when she's had enough. Allowing your baby to decide when she's hungry and when she's full will help her develop healthy eating patterns.

## How can I tell if my baby is feeding well?

You'll know your baby is feeding well when:

- **She's content after feeding.**
- **She has wet or dirty diapers each day.**  
As your baby's tummy gets bigger, she'll have more wet diapers. On the first day, she might have 1. Then, each day of the first week, she'll have a few more. After the first week, she should have between 6 and 10 wet or dirty diapers each day.
- **She's growing and gaining weight.**



## Weight gain and growth

It's normal for babies to lose a little weight in the first few days after they're born. By 2 to 3 weeks, most babies have gained that back and weigh the same as they did at birth.

From birth to 3 months, most babies gain between 675 and 900 grams (1½ to 2 pounds) per month.

From 4 to 6 months, most babies gain between 450 and 560 grams (1 to 1¼ pounds) per month.

As well as gaining weight, your baby is also growing longer. You may notice her outgrowing her newborn size sleepers!

Remember that every baby grows at her own pace. Talk to your health care provider if you have any concerns about how your baby is growing.

## Growth spurts

Babies have times when they grow very fast. For most babies, these growth spurts happen at around 10 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months.

Growth spurts usually last for only a few days.

During a growth spurt, your baby will be very hungry and want to feed more often than usual.

Follow your baby's cues. He'll let you know when he's hungry and how much he needs.

### Double Check

It's normal for your baby to want to feed more often and to take more formula during a growth spurt.

This does not mean that it's time to start solid food. Your baby's body won't be ready for solid food before 6 months. You'll find information on introducing solid food on page 34.



## How do I feed my baby?

Feeding your baby is a special time. It's a time to cuddle, enjoy, and connect with your baby.

### **Always hold your baby during feedings.**

- Hold him close. Babies love to be held skin-to-skin.
- Look into his eyes.
- Smile, talk, and sing to him.

Feeding times are a good time for brothers and sisters to connect with their new baby. They can sit with you and have a snack. They can talk or sing to the baby. You can tell everyone a story.

### **Double Check**

You'll find information on the importance of a strong bond with your baby in the "Help Your Baby Learn to Love" section of **Loving Care: Birth to 6 Months**.

### ***Your baby wants you to know—***

*Hold me close when you feed me. Look into my eyes and tell me you love me.*

## To feed your baby:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry with a clean cloth.
2. If you want to take the chill off formula that's been in the fridge, warm the bottle in a bottle warmer or a bowl of hot water. Don't warm the bottle for more than 15 minutes. Shake the bottle to be sure the formula is evenly heated. Do not warm a bottle more than once.
3. Test to be sure the formula isn't too hot. Let a drop fall onto your wrist. It should feel lukewarm, not hot.
4. Turn the bottle upside down. The formula should drip out of the nipple.
5. Cuddle your baby close and look into his eyes. Hold your baby so his head is higher than his tummy.
6. Hold the bottle so the nipple stays full.
7. When your baby slows down or seems uncomfortable, burp him. Offer him the bottle again.
8. Don't try to make your baby finish a bottle. Let your baby decide when he's full.

### CAUTION

**Do not use a microwave to heat the bottle,** even if you have a microwaveable bottle.

*Microwaves don't heat evenly. Parts of the formula can be cold. Other parts can be so hot they burn your baby's mouth.*

## CAUTION

It's not safe to prop a bottle anywhere—for example, in a crib, car seat, or stroller. Your baby could choke.

It is never safe to put your baby to bed with a bottle. Sleeping with a bottle can cause ear infections and early childhood tooth decay.

You'll find more information on caring for your baby's mouth and teeth in **Loving Care: Birth to 6 Months** and **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months**.

## Added info...

**Do not smoke while feeding or caring for your baby.** Your baby needs a smoke-free home.

You can find information on smoking, alcohol, and other drugs in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

## Don't feed your baby leftover formula

Your baby should start a new bottle at each feeding.

After each feeding, throw away any formula your baby doesn't finish.

There are two reasons for this:

- The formula has been at room temperature or warmer. Germs grow easily in warm formula.
- Germs from your baby's mouth mix with the formula during the feeding. They will grow in the formula if it's not thrown away.

**To avoid having to throw formula away, put only a small amount in each bottle.** If your baby needs more, you can always use a second bottle.



## Introduce solid food at 6 months

Parents often feel pressure to give their baby solid food. Babies shouldn't get solid food before 6 months.

When you give your baby solid food too soon, it fills her tummy. It makes her too full to drink much formula. This means that your baby will not get enough formula to give her the nourishment that she needs.

Six months may be later than the age you were when your parents first gave you solid food. It may be different from what others tell you. But there are good reasons to wait until 6 months.

- By 6 months, babies are able to begin learning how to swallow, chew, and pick up solid food.
- By 6 months, babies' bodies are ready for solid food.
- By 6 months, babies need foods that contain iron.

Until they're 6 months old, the nourishment babies get from formula is more important to their growth and development than anything they could get from solid food.

You'll find information on introducing your baby to family foods in **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health Services office.

**Added info...**

Giving your baby solid food will not help him sleep through the night.

Giving a baby solid food early does not mean that he is more mature or is developing faster than other babies.

Just because your baby reaches for the foods she sees you eating, it doesn't mean she's ready for solid food. Babies reach for just about everything they see—not just food.





## For more information

### For information about feeding your baby, contact:

- Public Health Services offices
- Family Resources Centres
- Health care providers

You'll find contact information for Public Health Services offices and Family Resource Centres in the back of any of the **Loving Care** books.

For information on feeding your baby in an emergency, like during a flood or hurricane, see the Department of Health and Wellness website:  
[novascotia.ca/dhw/environmental/floods.asp](http://novascotia.ca/dhw/environmental/floods.asp)





## Infant formula summary

- Wash your hands before preparing formula or feeding your baby.
- Clean and sanitize your prep area.
- Clean and sanitize all equipment until your baby is 6 months old.
- Follow mixing directions exactly.
- Be sure your well water is safe.
- Don't heat formula in a microwave, even if you have a microwaveable bottle.
- Store prepared bottles in the fridge.
- If the baby doesn't finish the formula in a bottle, throw the unfinished formula away.
- Use an ice pack to keep bottles cold when out with the baby.

Follow your baby's cues. A feeding isn't an amount of formula or a length of time. A feeding starts when your baby shows you he's hungry. It ends when he shows you he's had enough.



*How to Feed Your Baby with*  
**Infant Formula**



**2015**

*The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness protects, promotes, and supports breastfeeding. How to Feed Your Baby with Infant Formula has been developed to support mothers who have made an informed decision to feed their baby with infant formula.*

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