

Formula Feeding: Top Tips for Parents

Congratulations on your new baby! This leaflet provides an overview on safe formula feeding.

Types of Formula – *First Milk until First Birthday!*

Until your baby is 12 months old, the only formula they need is **first infant formula** milk. After 12 months, formula fed babies no longer require formula and they can drink full fat cow's milk.

We recommend you give your baby a cow's milk based formula. Soya based formulas are not recommended.

It doesn't matter which brand of formula you chose as they all are made with very similar ingredients.

Up until around six months of age, your baby does not need any other fluids than first infant formula, unless a health professional advises you to. Some women are advised by family or friends to give their baby cooled boiled water to drink. This is **not** advisable as water has no calorific content and can lead to weight loss.

There is no evidence that "comfort", "hungry baby" or "anti-reflux" milks are beneficial and there is no need to use "follow on" (stage 2) or "Growing Up" (stage 3) formulas as your baby gets older.

Sterilising

It is important to sterilise your feeding equipment correctly to help to reduce the risk of infection. Once your equipment is sterilised, you should not touch the teat that will go into your baby's mouth to ensure it does not become contaminated with bacteria. Whichever sterilisation method you chose to use, please follow the manufacturer's guidelines and ask your midwife if you are unsure.

Preparation of formula

Powdered infant formula milk is not sterile, so it is important to prepare each feed freshly and carefully to reduce the risk of your baby getting an infection.

- **Use tap water only** – do not use a purifier, water filter or bottled water.
- **Boil** 1 litre of fresh water in the kettle each time you make up a bottle.

After boiling the kettle, leave the water to cool for no longer than 30 minutes. If a smaller volume (less than 1 litre) is being boiled, then it will take much less time to cool the water. The aim is for the water to still be 70 degrees Celsius or more when the powder is added to ensure it kills most of the bacteria.

- Follow the packaging instructions regarding quantities of water to powder. Pour the required water into the bottle **first** and then use the scoop leveller to add the correct number of **level** scoops of formula. We would never advise adding more or less than the manufacturers recommendations. Apply the lid, shake gently, then cool quickly by placing the bottle under a cold running tap or in a jug of cold water.
- Check the temperature of the milk before giving it to your baby to ensure it is no warmer than body temperature.

Responsive bottle feeding and ‘pacing’ bottle feeds

‘Responsive feeding’ means feeding your baby when they show signs that they are ready to feed (‘feeding cues’), and stopping the feed when they shows signs that they have had enough. This improves the feeding experience for you and your baby, helps avoid overfeeding and helps baby’s brain development.

Feeding cues include:

- Putting hands to their mouth
- Licking their lips
- Turning their heads
- Rooting
- Making squeaking noises

Crying is a last resort for baby to tell you they are hungry or in need of comfort.

You may have been told by friends or family to feed your baby every 3 or 4 hours. We advise you to **feed your baby whenever they are hungry**. This may mean that they vary how frequently they feed. It is also normal for the amount of milk they take to vary with each feed too. We recommend you feed your baby whenever they show feeding cues, but ideally 6-12 times in 24 hours. Babies feel more secure when fed by their main carers. When babies feel secure they release a hormone called oxytocin, which acts like a fertiliser for their growing brain, helping them to be happy babies and more confident as they grow up.

Pacing a bottle feed

Once your baby has shown you they are hungry, hold them in a semi-upright position (ideally skin to skin), and look in to your baby’s eyes and talk to them during the feed.

- Gently rub the teat above baby’s top lip to encourage their mouth to open wide.

- Gently place the teat into your baby's mouth, allowing your baby to draw the teat further in. The baby should be latched deeply onto the teat, rather than just sucking on the end.
- Keep the bottle in a horizontal position, with just enough milk to fill the end of the teat. Keeping the bottle at a horizontal angle allows the milk to flow slowly. This means baby can control the flow of the milk better.
- Your baby should not gag or choke on the milk. If they do then, this can be a sign the milk is flowing too quickly. Feeds should be comfortable for them and their breathing should be calm and their hands and arms relaxed.
- Watch your baby closely and follow their cues that tell you they need a break. For example, they might stop suckling, turn their head to the side, pushing bottle away with their hand or dribbling milk from sides of mouth. When this happens, gently remove the teat or lower the bottle so the teat remains in their mouth, but there is no flow of milk.
- Once baby shows cues that they want to resume the feed, bring the bottle back to a horizontal position/offer the teat as above.
- **Let baby be in control of how much milk they drink** - Never force baby to finish a feed. When the baby is no longer showing any feeding cues they have had enough.

Winding

Some babies can become 'windy' during or following feeds. It is advisable to give your baby breaks during the feed and allow them to release any excess wind by winding them. The shape of the stomach means there is an area where air bubbles are more likely to get trapped. Tilting a baby to their left helps any gas to be released more easily as burps. Hold your baby firmly on your right shoulder with their bottom in the middle of your chest and gently pat baby's back. Once the baby has brought up wind, the feed can be resumed.

Ready-made formula

In some situations you may find it easier to use ready-made formula milk preparations. Please follow the preparation and storage guidance on the bottle as not all brands have the same guidance.

Out and about

If you won't have the facilities to make your baby a bottle of formula when you go out then you can take a flask of boiling water and make up a feed when they are needed. You should use a sterile pot for your measured powdered milk.

(Boiling water in a full 500ml vacuum flask allows the water to remain above 70°C for approximately 3 hours. A 1litre vacuum flask filled with boiling water will keep the water at above 70°C for at least 6 hours.)

Perfect Prep machines

Some people use 'Perfect Prep' machines to make up formula feeds. **We strongly advise you against using these machines** because they deliver a small volume ('shot') of very hot water and then add cool water to make up the rest of the feed. This is **not** a sufficient temperature to kill the bacteria in formula milk and your baby may become unwell.

You cannot spoil your baby by holding him / her too much!

You may have been told by friends or family to leave your baby to cry so they learn to 'soothe themselves' or to 'put your baby down more'. Please be reassured that ***it is impossible to spoil a baby!*** We recommend you cuddle your baby as much as possible and use skin to skin whenever is practical. Research shows cuddling your baby is great for their brain development – and it's a wonderful way for you to bond with your precious baby.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for health and our main source is from sunlight. Babies fed formula require a Vitamin D supplement until they are having 500ml/day or more of infant formula. This is because formula has Vitamin D added to it.

The Department of Health recommends that everyone over the age of one year should take 10 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin D supplement daily therefore we recommended parents to take a vitamin D supplement. The recommended doses are:

Baby: 8.5 to 10 mcg vitamin D per day Parent: 10 mcg vitamin D per day

Other concerns

If you have any concerns regarding any of the above, or concerns about the health of your baby, please speak to your midwife or health visitor.

