

Newborn Care: Formula and Bottle Feeding

Whether to breast or formula feed your baby is an important decision. While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breast milk for the first year, some families choose to use formula as a substitute.

“You have to hold it right there, ok?” “Ok.”

Formula feeding provides many of the calories and nutrients your baby needs. If you choose to formula feed, your baby needs to be on a formula for the first year of life. Cow’s milk is not adequate and should not be used.

Formulas are available in soy and milk- based varieties. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends an iron-fortified formula to provide the proper nutrition to bottle-feeding infants. Check with your baby’s healthcare provider about which formula they recommend.

Formula is available in three different forms: ready to use, liquid concentrate, and powder. When preparing liquid concentrate, boil cold or bottled water for two minutes and then let it cool to room temperature or refrigerate in a sterilized container. Pour water into a sterilized bottle then add the liquid concentrate formula according to the instructions.

To prepare powdered formula, boil water for two minutes. Turn off the burner and cover the pan. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature. Water should be 158 degrees Fahrenheit when mixing with formula. Pour the correct amount of hot water into the bottle. Remember to add the correct number of scoops of powdered formula to water, only using the scoop that comes with the formula.

You can store mixed formula in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours, but if it has been left out at room temperature for more than an hour, throw it away. If your baby doesn’t drink the entire bottle, do not save it for later. Throw the unused amount away.

There is a wide selection of bottles and nipples available. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Many new mothers try a few different types before making a choice. Bottles made in the USA are no longer made with a chemical called BPA. But if you are using hand-me-downs or older bottles, make sure they are BPA-free.

Whatever type of bottle you decide to use, make sure to follow the instructions for mixing and storing formula. You do not want leaks. And always remember to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before preparing formula. Formula that has been refrigerated should be placed in a container of hot water until it warms to room temperature before using it to feed your baby.

Never microwave formula. It could become too hot or create hot spots in the bottle and burn the baby’s mouth. Test the temperature of the formula on your wrist to make sure it is not too hot before feeding your child.

When you turn the bottle over, the formula should drip out, not flow in a stream. Replace the nipple if necessary. Newborns usually take 1.5 to 3 ounces at each feeding. Try to encourage frequent feedings. Babies normally eat every 2 to 4 hours because their stomachs are small, about the size of a walnut. Be careful not to overfeed. Naturally, the amount your baby eats will increase as she grows.

Your newborn may be sleepy and need to be awakened for feedings. After the first week or so, most babies will let you know when they are hungry by bringing their hands to their mouths, making rooting or sucking motions, or becoming very active. Get to know your baby’s feeding cues and answer them. This is called demand feeding.

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You can feed your healthy baby on demand, but if your baby doesn't show signs of being hungry, you should still schedule at least one feeding every three to four hours. After 2 weeks, if your baby is gaining weight, you may not need to wake him during the night to feed. Get the rest while you can.

To feed your baby, hold her in a semi-reclining position and burp your baby after every one to one and a half ounces. Formula fed babies often spit up a little while burping, so be prepared. Alternate feeding your baby from each side to encourage eye muscle development.

When you are finished the feeding, hand wash the nipples and squirt water through the holes to clean them. Clean the bottles and parts and sterilize them.

You'll know that you're more than one week old infant is getting enough milk if there are six or more wet diapers and at least one stool each day. Some babies may have a stool with each feeding. After a feeding your baby should look relaxed and content.