



Department of Public Health
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Public Health Notice

Shortage of Baby Formula

May 26, 2022

The California Department of Public Health/Women, Infants and Children Division (CDPH/WIC) is monitoring reports of widespread low-stock situations, outages, and rationing of powdered infant formula in California. The CDPH/WIC is also working closely with federal partners at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to monitor participant access to WIC-provided formulas.

The impacts of the ongoing pandemic and the recent 2022 Abbott recall of certain powdered formulas has led to periodic shortages of major brands of formula. The infant formula supply chain problems have affected all consumers, including California WIC families receiving formulas.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) warn against using recipes to make homemade infant formula. Using homemade infant formula can lead to serious health problems for babies. A baby's nutritional needs are very specific, especially in the first year of life. Homemade infant formulas may contain too little or too much of certain components, such as vitamins and minerals (like iron). Homemade infant formula may also have an increased risk of contamination, which could lead to babies getting sick or developing an infection.

Parents and caregivers are advised to avoid to the extent possible the following actions listed below:

- Watering down formulas by adding more water when mixing powdered formula or adding extra water to ready-to-serve, non-concentrated liquid formula.
- Making a homemade formula from ingredients at the store, such as powdered cow milk or raw milk and sugar.
- Feeding infants under one-year-old cow milk or other milk substitutes from the dairy section of the grocery store, such as almond or soy beverages (sometimes labeled as milk).
- Using imported formulas from other countries that are not reviewed by the FDA.

Parents or caregivers of infants who have consumed a homemade infant formula should contact their healthcare provider to receive further care and guidance; and providers should report any illnesses or symptoms possibly related to the formula dilution or substitution to their local Health Department so that further public health assistance can be provided.

If a WIC family's healthcare provider has written a prescription for a special formula, and it is not available at any stores, they should contact their WIC local office. Their doctor may write a prescription for another special formula, or multiple special formulas that will work for their baby.

Consumers can take the following steps if they are having difficulty finding infant formula:

- Purchase formula at the beginning of the benefit cycle.
- Call stores directly before leaving and ask for availability of formula (ask grocers what days they expect formula shipments).
- Contact your local WIC agency on specific formula needs.
- Contact your provider for guidance on alternative baby formula options.

Additional Resources

California Department of Public Health/Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program:

- <https://www.myfamily.wic.ca.gov/Home/FormulaShortage#FormulaShortage>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/Pages/Infant-Formula-Availability/Infant-Formula-Availability.aspx>

United States Food and Drug Administration:

- [FDA: FDA Advises Parents and Caregivers to Not Make or Feed Homemade Infant Formula to Infants](#)
- [FDA: Infant Formula: Safety Do's and Don'ts](#)
- [FDA: Questions & Answers for Consumers Concerning Infant Formula](#)