

# Safe Formula Feeding



## Dear New Parent,

Thank you for letting us be a part of your first days with your baby. Our job is to give you good information and support so that you can meet your parenting goals. This brochure includes information about the risks of formula feeding. If you decide to feed your baby formula, this brochure will give you the information you need to do so safely.

With thanks,  
Your Health Care Team



## 1. Risks of Formula

Breastfeeding is the safest, healthiest way to feed a baby. It can be difficult to learn how to breastfeed, but our staff is here to help you.

Before making a decision whether or not to give your baby formula, you should know the key risks:

- Formula is not sterile. The bacteria sometimes found in formula can be dangerous for babies. If you choose to use formula, follow the steps in this brochure to reduce the risk of infection.
- Premature babies, sick babies and babies younger than three months are at a higher risk of infection from formula.

## 2. Preparing a Bottle

To prepare a bottle properly:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- Disinfect the space where you will prepare the bottle.
- Sanitize your feeding supplies at least once a day. To do so, use a bottle sterilizer or dishwasher (if dishwasher safe), or place them in boiling water for five minutes. This is especially important if your baby is younger than three months, premature or has a weakened immune system.
- Allow the feeding supplies to cool before using.
- Between feedings, use a bottle brush to wash the bottle and nipple with soap and water.



## 3. Mixing the Formula

- Check the container to make sure the expiration date has not passed. Check for formula recalls at [foodsafety.gov/recalls](https://www.foodsafety.gov/recalls).
- Read the instructions on the formula package to see how much water and formula (powder or concentrate) you need.
- Measure enough cold tap water for the amount of formula you plan to prepare.
- Boil the water for one minute and let it cool no longer than 30 minutes. The water must be no cooler than 158 degrees Fahrenheit (70 degrees Celsius) to kill the bacteria in the formula.
- Pour the correct amount of boiled and cooled water into the sterilized bottle. Remember to always add the formula (powder or concentrate) AFTER the water.



- If using concentrate, shake the container before opening. Add the exact amount of formula (powder or concentrate) to the bottle. Using too much or too little formula can make your baby sick.
- Place the nipple, ring and top on the bottle. Shake the bottle to mix the formula well.

**NEVER** use a microwave to prepare or rewarm formula. Microwaves heat the formula unevenly. This may cause a “hot spot,” which can burn the baby’s mouth.

## 4. Cooling the Formula

- Check the temperature by dripping some formula on the inside of your wrist. It should feel warm, but not hot.
- If it is too warm, hold the bottle – with the top still on – under cool tap water to cool the formula. You can also place the bottle in a bowl of ice water.
- When the formula is the right temperature, dry the outside of the bottle.
- Prepared formula can sit at room temperature for two hours. If feeding has begun, use the formula and throw it away within one hour.



## 5. Making and Storing Formula for Later Use

- If you must prepare feedings in advance, refrigerate the bottles immediately. The refrigerator must be between 35 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit (between 1.66 and 4.44 degrees Celsius).
  - Throw away any refrigerated formula that has not been used within 24 hours.
- Rewarm the formula within 15 minutes of taking it out of the refrigerator.
  - To rewarm it, place the bottle in a cup of warm water and shake it to make sure the formula heats evenly.
  - Throw away any used formula within two hours of taking it out of the refrigerator.
- Follow the instructions on the container for storing unused formula.

## 6. Feeding From a Bottle

- Hold your baby close, look into your baby's eyes and keep eye contact. Feeding is an opportunity to bond.
- Hold your baby so their head is higher than their chest. This allows the baby to swallow safely.
- Follow your baby's cues. Your baby may want to drink slow or fast.
- Let the baby stop sucking often. It is normal to take breaks during a meal.
- Burp the baby during and after every feeding.
- When babies are full, they may turn their heads away, fall asleep or stop sucking. Respect these signs. Never force the baby to finish a bottle.

**NEVER prop a baby bottle, leave the baby alone with a bottle, or leave a bottle in the bed or crib with a baby. This can cause the baby to choke, spit up, get ear infections or rot their teeth.**

