This leaflet contains new information that will help you to bottle feed your baby as safely as possible

This new advice is based on guidance from the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency. It may differ from what you have done before if you have older children, but to minimise any risk it is recommended that you follow the advice in this leaflet.

New safety advice

When using powdered infant formula milk, it is very important to ensure that it is prepared in the safest way possible. Powdered infant formula milk is not a sterile product, and even though tins and packets of milk powder are sealed, they can contain bacteria such as Enterobacter sakazakii and more rarely Salmonella.

If the feed is not prepared safely, these bacteria can cause infections – and even though these are extremely rare, when they do happen they can be life-threatening. Therefore, it is important to make up the formula milk with water at a temperature of around 70°C, which will kill these bacteria. In practice this means boiling the kettle and leaving it to cool for no longer than 30 minutes. Very young babies are at most risk, and it is better to use commercially sterile, liquid ready-to-feed products for premature or low birth weight babies.
Because it's impossible to completely destroy all the bacteria that may be present, it's also important to make up a fresh bottle for each feed. Bacteria multiply rapidly at room temperature and can even survive and multiply slowly in some fridges, so storing formula milk for any length of time increases the risk.

All the equipment used for feeding your baby needs to be sterilised.

By sterilising your feeding equipment, washing your hands and keeping the preparation area clean, you will reduce the chance of your baby getting sickness and diarrhoea.

Formula milk does not protect your baby against infection as breastmilk does.
How to sterilise

The following cleaning and sterilising instructions apply whether you are using expressed breastmilk or infant formula milk.

Clean and rinse

Clean the bottle and teat in hot soapy water as soon as possible after a feed, using a clean bottle brush.

Rinse all your equipment in clean running cold water before sterilising.
Cold water sterilising

Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Change the sterilising solution every 24 hours.

Leave feeding equipment in sterilising solution for at least 30 minutes.

Make sure there is no air trapped in the bottles or teats when putting them in the sterilising solution.

Keep all the equipment under the solution with a floating cover.

Steam sterilising

Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Make sure the openings of the bottles and teats are facing down in the steriliser.

Any equipment not used straight away should be re-sterilised before use.
Making up a feed

Before making up a feed, clean and disinfect the surface you are going to use.

It's really important that you WASH YOUR HANDS.
If you are using a cold water steriliser, shake off any excess solution from the bottle and the teat or rinse the bottle with cooled boiled water from the kettle (not the tap).

Stand the bottle on a clean surface.

Keep the teat and cap on the upturned lid of the steriliser. Avoid putting them on the work surface.