Guide to bottle feeding
How to prepare infant formula and sterilise feeding equipment to minimise the risks to your baby
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The information in this booklet comes from the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency. It will help you minimise the risks to your baby when you prepare and give infant formula, and sterilise equipment.

It is very important that you follow the instructions in this booklet when you are:

- preparing infant formula feeds;
- sterilising feeding bottles; and
- sterilising feeding equipment.

If you need more information about bottle feeding your baby, speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP.
What is infant formula?

Infant formula is made from cow’s milk that has been treated to make it suitable for babies. There are a number of different brands in the shops that meet the required legal standards. The cow’s milk in infant formula contains a mix of two types of proteins – whey and casein.

Different types of infant formula

Infant formula is available in two forms:

- ready-to-feed liquid infant formula, sold in cartons, which is sterile; and
- powdered infant formula, which is not sterile.

First infant formula

This is often described as suitable for newborns. It is based on the whey of cow’s milk and is thought to be easier to digest than other types of infant formula. This should always be the first formula you give to your baby.

Unless your midwife, health visitor or GP suggests otherwise, this is the only infant formula your baby needs. Your baby can stay on this formula when you start to introduce solid foods at around six months, and continue on it throughout the first year.

When your baby is one year old, they can start to drink whole cow’s milk.

There is no evidence to suggest that changing the brand of infant formula your baby drinks does any good or harm. However, if you think a particular brand of infant formula disagrees with your baby, try another. Your midwife or health visitor will be able to discuss this with you.
Casein based infant formula

Infant formula that is mostly based on casein is thought to take your baby longer to digest than whey-based formula. It is not recommended for young babies.

There is little nutritional difference between this formula and first infant formula. Although it is often described as suitable for ‘hungrier babies’ there is no evidence that babies settle better or sleep longer when fed this formula.

Follow-on formula

This is also casein based and should never be fed to babies under six months of age. Research has found no clear benefit from its use. However, the labels on this formula can look very similar to those on first infant formula, so read them carefully to avoid making a mistake.

Other formulae

Some follow-on formula has cereal added to it, and is described as a ‘night-time feed for babies’. This type of formula is not necessary and there is no evidence that babies settle better or sleep longer when fed this. It should never be given to babies under six months.

Soya infant formula is made from soya beans, not cow’s milk. Do not use soya formula unless it has been prescribed or recommended by your GP. If your baby is diagnosed as being allergic to cow’s milk, your GP will prescribe an appropriate infant formula with fully hydrolysed proteins.

Infant formula with partially hydrolysed proteins is available in the shops, but this is not suitable for babies with a cow’s milk allergy.
Remember, if you have any questions about the infant formula you are giving your baby, you can ask your midwife, health visitor or GP for information and help.

KEY FACTS:

Types of milk to avoid

Not all milk is suitable for feeding babies. Here are some of the types of milk you should never give to a baby under one year:

- Condensed milk
- Evaporated milk
- Dried milk
- Sheep's milk
- Goat's milk
- Other types of drinks known as ‘milks’ such as rice, oat or almond drinks
- Cow's milk as a drink.
How do I choose feeding equipment?

There is a large variety of feeding equipment available in shops. You will need a number of bottles and teats, as well as sterilising equipment to keep them clean.

Feeding teats can be made from rubber or silicone and vary in shape. There is no evidence that one teat is better than another. You can try different teats and use the one that suits your baby best.

Feeding bottles are made of food-grade plastic. However, some shapes and patterns on bottles can make them difficult to clean. A simple, easy-to-clean bottle is best.
How to sterilise feeding equipment

There are several ways in which you can sterilise your baby’s feeding equipment, such as:

- using a cold water sterilising solution;
- steam sterilising; and
- sterilising by boiling.

The following instructions apply to all feeding equipment you use for your baby – whether you are using expressed breast milk or infant formula.

Before sterilising, always clean and rinse

- Clean the feeding 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, cold running water before sterilising.

Cold water sterilising solution

- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Change the sterilising solution every 24 hours.
- Leave feeding equipment in the sterilising solution for at least 30 minutes.
• Make sure that 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.

**KEY FACT:**
All feeding items must be washed and rinsed before they are sterilised. It is important to follow the instructions that come with your steriliser.

**Steam sterilising (electric steriliser or microwave)**

• As there are different types of sterilisers it is important to follow the manufacturer’s instructions.

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

• Manufacturers will give a guide as to how long you can leave equipment that you are not using straight after sterilising before it needs to be resterilised.
Sterilising by boiling

- When using this method, care must be taken to ensure safety and prevent scalds or burns. Hot pans and liquids should not be left unattended, especially if children are present.
- Make sure that whatever you sterilise in this way is safe to boil.
- Boil the feeding equipment in water for at least 10 minutes, making sure that all items stay under the surface of the water.
- Remember that teats tend to get damaged faster with this method.

**KEY FACTS:**

Be careful to prevent anyone, especially children, from being burned or hurt if you are using the boiling method.

Regularly check that teats and bottles are not torn, cracked or damaged.

- Wash hands thoroughly. Clean and disinfect the surface where you will put together the bottle and teat.
- It is best to remove the bottles just before they are used.
- If the bottles are not being used immediately, they should be put together fully with the teat and lid in place to prevent the inside of the sterilised bottle and the inside and outside of the teat from being contaminated.
How to make up a feed

Bacteria in infant formula
Even when tins and packets of powdered infant formula are sealed, they can sometimes contain bacteria such as Cronobacter sakazakii (formerly known as Enterobacter sakazakii) and more rarely Salmonella. Although these bacteria are very rare, the infections they cause can be life-threatening.

To reduce the risk of infection, make up each feed as your baby needs it, using boiled water at a temperature of 70°C or above. Water at this temperature will kill any harmful bacteria that may be present.

KEY FACTS:
Make up feeds, one at a time, as your baby needs them.
Always use boiled water at a temperature of at least 70°C, but remember to let the feed cool before you give it to the baby.