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## **Infant formula shortages: What to do if you're impacted Resources for families and caregivers**

OLYMPIA – The nationwide infant formula shortage has caused stress for many families. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has compiled resources to assist families trying to find nutritionally appropriate food for their babies. The information below comes from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Washington WIC program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. While the shortage has been persisting since the pandemic, it has worsened due to supply chain issues, the February recall of several baby formula products due to possible contamination, and the voluntary closure of a facility in Michigan by Abbott Laboratories - the country's largest manufacturer of infant formula. Though Abbott reached an agreement with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the steps needed to restart production, it will still be weeks before any formula products from that facility become publicly available.

If you are struggling to find infant formula and have concerns about your child's nutrition, your first step is to check out the links and resources provided to get accurate information. If you still have concerns about your child's health, contact your child's primary care provider's office and ask to speak with a nurse, medical assistant, or health educator on your child's care team. "Your child's doctor and care team are a great source of information for any concerns about your baby's health and nutrition," says Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, Chief Science Officer, Washington State Department of Health. "They may be able to make recommendations about switching to a formula that's easier to find or give tips on where to go when your usual sources of formula are out of stock."

For people needing connection to health care providers, call the Help Me Grow WA hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for referrals and to apply for food and health resources in Washington. Additional support and resources are also available to participants in federal and state nutrition programs.

For WIC participants and families, contact your local WIC clinic to get infant formula benefits replaced or change baby formulas. WIC has expanded the types of formula they provide to offer more choices for families participating in the program. They can often tell you which stores have formula in stock. If you can't reach your local clinic, call the state WIC office at 1-800-841-1410 Monday to Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. Check the Washington WIC web page for more information on approved replacement infant formulas.

For participants in Basic Food (SNAP), visit the Parenthelp123 web page or call 1-800-322-2588.

In this urgent situation, the AAP says it's ok for most babies to switch to any available formula, including store brands, unless your baby is on a specific extensively hydrolyzed or amino acid-based formula for certain medical conditions. Contact your child's primary care provider to ask about specialty formula alternatives.

Though it might be tempting to try to make homemade formula, the AAP cautions not to do this because formula recipes might not have enough vital nutrients or could contain too much salt or other elements that could be harmful to your baby.



Also, at the request of the FDA, Abbott is releasing limited quantities of metabolic nutrition formulas that were previously on hold following Abbott's recall of some powder infant formulas from its Sturgis, Mich., facility. These products have been tested, are safe for distribution, and were not included in the recall. These products also require a medical referral. Patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals in need of these products should contact Abbott at +1-800-881-0876 to provide necessary information.

If you suspect you have recalled formula on hand, you can check to see which formulas are recalled at Washington WIC.

Some additional tips to help with your infant formula search:

- Check smaller stores and drug stores or buy online from reputable distributors and pharmacies.
- Contact manufacturers directly:
  - o Gerber's MyGerber Baby Expert: reach a certified nutrition or lactation consultant by phone, text, Facebook Messenger, web chat, or video call, who can help you identify a similar formula that may be more readily available
  - o Abbott's Consumer Hotline: call 1-800-986-8540
  - o Abbott's urgent product request line: ask your OBGYN or your infant's pediatrician to submit an urgent product request by downloading and completing the form - PDF
  - o Mead Johnson/Reckitt's Customer Service line: call 1-800 BABY-123 (222-9123)
- Check out community resources:
  - o Locate your nearest Community Action Agency (CAA). Your neighborhood CAA may be able to provide you with formula or connect you with local agencies that have formula in stock.
  - o United Way's 2-1-1: dial 2-1-1 to be connected to a community resource specialist affiliated with United Way who may be able to help you identify food pantries and other charitable sources of local infant formula and baby food.
  - o Feeding America: call your local food bank to ask whether they have infant formula and other supplies in stock.
  - o Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA): certain HMBANA-accredited milk banks are distributing donated breast milk to mothers in need; please note that some may require a prescription from a medical professional. Find an HMBANA-accredited milk bank.

Relactation or induced lactation is also possible and can be an alternative to using formula, but it does take time and effort. La Leche League International has resources on how to stimulate milk supply.

"No family should be in a position where they are worried about how they are going to feed their children," says Kwan-Gett. "We need to prioritize food security so that every family can be sure that their child is getting nutrition for optimal growth and development."

Please visit DOH's new nutritional guidance resources page for more information on what to do and actions to take that are safe for your child.

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