

The Information contained in this handout applies to healthy, full-term babies who drink standard formula, not specialized therapeutic formula. If a specialized formula is needed, talk to your doctor.

Basic **Guide** to **Formula Feeding**

For more information about WIC:

Call

1-800-522-5006

Email

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Visit us on the web at

www.health.ny.gov/wic
www.breastfeedingpartners.org

or contact your local WIC office



Developed by the New York State WIC Program
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Feeding your baby takes time, practice, and patience, but you are not alone. WIC is here to help whether you choose to breastfeed, formula feed, or use a combination of both.

Recognizing Hunger Cues:

- Signs your baby is hungry:
 - Sucking noises/motions
 - Hands in their mouth
 - Smacking their lips
 - Turning their head towards your hand when you stroke their cheek (rooting)
 - Clenched hands and fists over their stomach and/or chest
 - Flexed arms and legs
 - Crying is a late sign of hunger
- Your baby may be less hungry if they are not feeling well.
- Your baby may eat more during growth spurts.
- Not all crying is a sign of hunger. If you recently fed your baby, check to see if the diaper is dirty, the room is too hot or cold, if they need to be burped, or if there is too much noise. Maybe they want a change in environment, or a snuggle.



If you have concerns about your baby's growth, talk with your doctor and/or WIC nutritionist.

Before you feed your baby formula, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor about:

- The need to boil bottles and nipple before using.
- Using cooled, boiled water for mixing.

Wash and Clean

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap.
- Clean your work surface or countertop.
- Clean the formula container top. This washes away dirt and germs. If you need a can opener, wash it with warm soapy water or in the dishwasher before use.
- Do not use the formula container if it is damaged or the seal is broken or missing.



Use a safe bottle:

- Only use bottles that are labeled Bisphenol A (BPA) free (glass, flexible plastic, etc.).

Make sure the bottles and nipples are clean by:

- Washing bottles, nipples, and bottle parts in hot soapy water (rinse well), or on the top rack of the dishwasher after every use.

Mixing Formula

Always follow the label directions when mixing formula, and the advice from your doctor. Amounts of water for mixing may vary by formula type and brand.

- Use cold tap water or bottled water for mixing. Do not use hot tap water because it may contain lead. If you are not sure about the safety of your tap water, contact your local health department.
- After formula is added to the bottle, gently stir or shake the bottle to mix. Shaking too hard creates air bubbles. If your baby swallows too much air it can cause gas, pain, and fussiness.
- If prepared formula has been left out at room temperature for more than one hour, throw it out.

It's best to only make enough formula for one feeding at a time, and to feed your baby right away.

Powder

1. Measure and pour the amount of water needed into the clean bottle, first.
2. Add the powder to the bottle as directed. The scoop of powder should be level and unpacked. It should not be overflowing.
3. Only use the scoop provided in the can, and make sure the scoop is dry when put back.
4. Mix gently.



Be sure to use the right amount of water. Not enough water makes the formula hard to digest, and too much water can lead to poor growth.

Concentrate

1. Shake the container first, then open it.
2. Measure the amounts of water and formula needed as directed on the label.
3. Pour into clean bottles.
4. Mix gently.

Ready-to-Use

1. Shake the container first, then open it.
2. Depending on the label directions, either measure and pour amount needed into a clean bottle, or attach a clean nipple and ring directly to the top.
3. You should not mix ready-to-use formula with water.

Warming formula is not necessary, but some babies prefer it. If you choose to warm the formula:

- Place the bottle in a small bowl of warm water or hold the bottle under warm running water for a few minutes, and then gently shake it.
- Do not heat the bottle in the microwave. You can burn your baby's mouth.

Always test the temperature of the formula before feeding by sprinkling a few drops on your wrist. It should feel warm, not hot.



Safe Formula Storage

- Read label for instructions
- Keep unopened container in cool, dry place.
- Make sure lids are on tight
- Throw away any formula left in the bottle after feeding your baby
- Throw away prepared formula that has been unrefrigerated for 1 hour or more.
- Do not freeze formula. This will not extend the shelf life.
- Avoid extreme temperatures.

Feeding Your Baby

Find a quiet, comfortable place for feeding. Cuddle your baby and speak gently during this bonding time.

Never prop up the bottle, put your baby to bed with a bottle, or leave baby alone with a bottle. Doing this can cause choking, tooth decay, ear infections, and spitting up.

Make sure that the nipple hole of the bottle is the right size for your baby. They come in many sizes, so you may need to try a few nipples or bottles before you find one that works best.

- Rule-of-thumb: Formula should drip out at about one drop per second when the bottle is turned upside-down.

Paced Feeding

During a feeding, keep your baby semi-upright, to reduce spitting-up, choking risks, and have better control of the flow of formula. Here are more tips:

- Hold the bottle flat, and fill the nipple with formula.
- Encourage your baby to take the nipple into their mouth, but try not to force them.
- Your baby should suck on the nipple to get formula from the bottle, instead of it being poured into their mouth.
- Let your baby take breaks.
- Slow the pace of the feeding by tipping the bottle away from their mouth, if your baby drinks too fast.
- Burp your baby every few ounces. It helps bring up air that has been swallowed during feeding.
- A little spit-up is normal, but if it becomes too much after every feeding, talk to your doctor.

Put only formula or pumped breastmilk in a baby bottle.



How Much Should You Feed Your Baby?

Your baby's stomach is very small (about the size of their fist). You need to feed your baby often, but in small amounts. Most babies will want to eat every few hours. All babies are different and formula amounts change as babies get older, but as a general rule, a baby will consume about ½ ounce of formula per pound of body weight at each feeding, until they start to eat solid foods.



Your baby will tell you when they are full, even if they do not finish the bottle. Look for cues:

- Stops suckling
- Pushes away from the bottle
- Falls asleep
- Focus is on surroundings rather than feeding

Signs that your baby is getting the right amount:

- Your baby gains weight at a steady rate. (Most babies lose a little weight in their first two weeks, but regain it.)
- Five-six wet/soiled diapers a day is typical for the first month.
- Your baby is happy, relaxed, and satisfied after feedings.
- As your baby grows and starts eating more solid foods, the amount of formula they eat will likely decrease.
- Babies may eat more on one day and less on another. This is normal - just watch closely, and your baby will tell you when they are hungry.

The only foods a baby needs in their first 6 months is breast-milk and/or formula. Solid foods, including infant cereal, may be introduced at 6 months if your baby is developmentally ready.