

Public Service Announcement: Make Safe Choices During the National Baby Formula Shortage

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Cooperstown, N.Y. – As the United States grapples with a national baby formula shortage, Bassett Healthcare Network (BHN) wants to ensure parents are aware of the right and wrong ways to conserve resources.

Baby formulas are made with the exact amounts of specific nutrients—the right amounts of protein, calcium, iron, sodium and vitamins that babies need for healthy growth and development. The FDA carefully scrutinizes this balance to ensure any formulas sold in the US are safe and meet the nutritional standards that babies need.

For this reason, while it may be tempting when stretching out a home supply, watering down formula is not safe. Watering down formula dilutes the nutrients, causing a baby get full without consuming all they need. It can cause nutritional imbalances in your baby and lead to serious health problems including seizures. When mixing formula, always follow label instructions provided by the manufacturer or those given to you by your pediatrician.

Likewise, we also do not recommend following a recipe for homemade formula as it can also be dangerous. As with diluted formula, homemade formula may not contain the right amounts of the nutrients a baby needs. Ingredients such as calcium and phosphorus can affect each other in ways that can affect a baby's growth. Excessively high or low sodium or calcium levels can lead to hospitalization and even death. Homemade formulas can also become contaminated, which can result in serious infections. There have been reports of babies being hospitalized for nutritional deficiencies after taking homemade formula.

Instead, patients should be flexible about brands based on what's available.

“The common rule of thumb is to choose a brand and stick with it for consistency,” explains Dr. Monica Brané, BHN's chief of pediatrics. “But for most babies, it is OK to switch to any available formula, including store brands. The only exceptions are babies on a specific extensively hydrolyzed or amino acid-based formula, such as Elecare. For those no store brand exists.”

Any parents with an infant on a strict diet should consult with a pediatrician before changing formulas—preferably the pediatrician who directed them to go on the diet.

For more information, Bassett pediatricians also recommend the following resources:

- HealthyChildren.org: With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any?
<https://healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Are-there-shortages-of-infant-formula-due-to-COVID-19.aspx>
- HealthyChildren.org: Relactation: Starting over with Breastfeeding <https://healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Relactation.aspx>
- Healthy Children.org: Is Homemade Baby Formula Safe?
<https://healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Is-Homemade-Baby-Formula-Safe.aspx>

Anyone with further questions or concerns should speak with their child's pediatrician or family practitioner.