

Guidance for Virginia Department of Health Local Health Departments

May 16, 2022

What To Do If You Can't Find Infant Formula

Infant formula has become difficult to find in the last month. The reason is the temporary shutdown by the FDA of the plant that manufactures roughly half of the U.S. supply. The FDA is busy attempting to get the plant reopened, but until that occurs, supplies of formula will be less than normal. This document is intended to help parents and caregivers of infants under one year of age to navigate the shortage, while ensuring the best possible nutrition for their babies. What follows is a list of Dos and Don'ts, when you're having trouble finding baby formula.

IF FORMULA IS HARD TO FIND:

DOs:

- 1) Do check with your baby's physician or healthcare provider for any questions, especially if your baby is on a restricted diet or has any medical conditions.
- 2) Do call ahead to nearby stores to find the ones that have formula before you travel.
- 3) Do check smaller markets and drug stores when the big box stores and supermarkets are out.
- 4) Do consider purchasing formula on-line if you can afford it. Only purchase from well-established distributors and pharmacies.
- 5) Do purchase only a 10-14-day supply each time. It appears unlikely that the supply is going to run out, and hoarding will only make shortages worse.
- 6) Do purchase alternate or store-brand formulas if your baby is not on a restricted diet and has no major health problems.

- 7) Do check with social media support groups for help finding formula vendors, check with your baby's healthcare provider before purchasing.
- 8) Do contact your local health department or WIC office for their recommendations for your community. Go to [Local Health Districts](#) and click on part of the map that contains your location, or call locally.

DON'Ts:

- 1) Don't purchase formula on-line from private vendors or auctions. You won't know what you're actually getting, and there is little or no control over pricing.
- 2) Don't purchase formula from foreign or overseas locations. These products will not be FDA cleared, and may contain contaminants or ingredients inappropriate for your baby.
- 3) Don't feed homemade formula from a recipe. Even if only safe ingredients are used, these formulas will not provide adequate nutrition.
- 4) Don't water down or dilute your existing formula as your baby will not get adequate nutrition.
- 5) Don't feed your baby any plant-based milks as they lack many key nutrients.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS:

- 1) If your baby is 6 to 12 months of age and has no health or dietary problems, [you may feed your baby cow's milk for short periods until you can obtain proper formula](#). This recommendation is for urgent situations only and should not be done for a prolonged period.
- 2) If you are still pregnant but will deliver soon, please give extra consideration to breastfeeding. Most women can breastfeed, and you are likely to avoid the formula shortage altogether. For more information, see [Breastfeeding](#) or [CDC Breastfeeding Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) or [Virginia Breastfeeding Coalition](#).

REMEMBER: talk to your baby's healthcare provider with any questions.

OTHER HELPFUL SITES:

[Fact Sheet: Helping Families Find Formula During the Infant Formula Shortage | HHS.gov](#)

[With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any? - HealthyChildren.org](#)