



# INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES DURING THE SHORTAGE OF FORMULA FOR INFANTS WITH FOOD ALLERGIES

There is no current shortage of **regular** infant formula in Canada. This includes non-hydrolyzed formulas for healthy babies and partially hydrolyzed formulas for babies with gastrointestinal discomfort. These types of formula are still found on shelves in retail stores and pharmacies.

However, there is a shortage of infant formulas for infants with food allergies and certain medical conditions. This includes extensively hydrolyzed formulas and amino acid-based formulas. During the shortage, these can only be purchased through your pharmacist.

**Extensively hydrolyzed formulas** are generally used for mild to moderately severe allergies.

Common brand names include:

- Nutramigen® A+
- Nutramigen® A+ LGG
- Pregestimil® A+
- Similac Alimentum®

**Amino acid-based formulas** are recommended for severe allergies that are life-threatening and are usually available by prescription.

Common brand names include:

- Neocate® Infant DHA & ARA
- Puramino® A+

Health Canada does **not** recommend extensively hydrolyzed formulas for:

- the **prevention** of food allergies. No formula has proven benefits for allergy prevention.
- infants with a sensitivity to lactose, **unless** they also have an allergy or other medical condition requiring these formulas.

There are alternatives if your usual formula is not available. Speak to your healthcare professional if you need help finding the best option for your situation. Speak to your pharmacist to purchase extensively hydrolyzed and amino acid-based formula during the shortage.

**Do not buy more infant formula than you need. We all need to conserve infant formulas during the shortage, especially hypoallergenic formulas for infants with medical conditions.**



*This can be a distressing situation for parents and caregivers. If this shortage has impacted you, this information may help.*



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## WHAT YOU CAN

### Do



- ▶ Breastfeed your baby, if you can.
- ▶ Maintain or increase your breastmilk supply if you are combining bottle-feeding and breastfeeding.
- ▶ Reserve specialized infant formulas for babies with allergies and medical conditions.
- ▶ Speak to a healthcare professional, such as a doctor, registered dietitian or nurse about your baby's needs.
- ▶ Try a different brand of formula under the recommendation of your healthcare provider. It's normal for infants to take time to adjust to a new formula.
- ▶ Speak to a pharmacist to access extensively hydrolyzed and amino acid-based infant formula.
- ▶ Follow label instructions when preparing infant formula.
- ▶ Introduce solid foods when your baby is about 6 months old.

### Don't



- ▶ Make homemade infant formula. It can put your infant's health at serious risk.
- ▶ Dilute or water down your infant formula to extend its use. This dilutes the nutritional content of the formula and can put your infant's health at risk.
- ▶ Buy more infant formula than you need, especially hypoallergenic formula that infants with food allergies need.
- ▶ Use formula from other countries unless they are [approved by Health Canada](#).
- ▶ Use infant formula from unknown sources, such as online third parties.
- ▶ Use breast milk obtained online or directly from other individuals.
- ▶ Substitute infant formula for other beverages, like cow's milk, goat's milk, evaporated milk, fortified or unfortified plant-based beverages (like soy, oat, rice, almond, coconut, cashew).



## SPEAK TO A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Discuss your baby's needs with a qualified healthcare professional, such as a:

- doctor
- registered dietitian
- nurse practitioner

They can help recommend possible formula substitutes and how to transition them into your baby's diet. Your pharmacist can help you find these recommended products.

If you cannot access your regular health care provider for timely advice, contact the Telehealth service in your province or territory.

### Explore breastfeeding resources

If you can, breastfeed your baby. Breast milk contains very low levels of allergenic proteins, and is the best choice for most babies with or without food allergies. If you stopped breastfeeding within the past 6 weeks, consider restarting. If you combine bottle-feeding and breastfeeding, try to maintain or increase your breast milk supply.

There are plenty of resources that can help you.

Many people can give support and advice, including:

- a lactation consultant
- your healthcare provider (doctor, nurse, midwife)
- breastfeeding support groups, like La Leche League



You can also talk to a registered dietitian if you're breastfeeding and need to follow a diet that avoids specific allergens.

Health Canada does **not** recommend using human breast milk obtained online or directly from individuals.

### Learn more about:

- [La Leche League Canada](#)
- [Breastfeeding \(Caring for Kids\)](#)
- [Find a Dietitian \(Dietitians of Canada\)](#)
- [Safety of donor human milk in Canada](#)
- [Ten valuable tips for successful breastfeeding](#)



## TRY A DIFFERENT BRAND OF FORMULA

Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider for advice on whether your child can try a different formula. It's normal for infants to take time adjusting to a new formula. They may become gassy or fussy but this should improve in a few days.

Continue with a trial of any new formula for at least 7 to 14 days unless severe symptoms occur, such as:

- immediate vomiting
- difficulty breathing
- generalized hives
- loss of consciousness
- noticeable weight loss
- severe diarrhea (sometimes with blood in poop)

If your infant is 10 months or older, talk to your healthcare provider about an early transition to follow up formulas such as:

- Equacare® Jr
- Essential Care® Jr
- Neocate® Junior
- Neocate® Splash
- Vivonex® Pediatric
- Puramino® Junior

These formulas are usually for infants over 12 months old who have allergies.

### Try formula from another country

Health Canada has recently allowed certain infant formulas from other countries to be sold in Canada during the shortage. These formulas must meet the same rigorous safety standards as Canadian products to be added to the list of authorized products.

Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider for advice on whether your infant can try any of these formulas. Your pharmacist can help you find these products.

- ▶ Do **not** use formula from other countries unless they are on this list.
- ▶ Do **not** use infant formula from unknown sources, such as online third parties.

### Learn more about:

- [Products imported for consumers](#)



## SPEAK TO A PHARMACIST

Talk to a pharmacist to purchase extensively hydrolyzed and amino acid-based formula. These specialized formulas can only be ordered at the pharmacy counter to help manage their limited supply.

Health Canada provided information to pharmacists to help them navigate the shortage:

- A list of all hypoallergenic infant formula that could be found during the shortage
- The estimated timing of incoming shipments
- Product information to help them find these formulas with their distributor(s)
- Label information in both official languages for formulas being imported from other countries

Once you order formula from your pharmacist, it may take a few days for them to receive the order. It is best to reach out to your pharmacist before you run out of supply.

### Learn more:

- [Information for pharmacy professionals](#)



## FEED YOUR BABY SAFELY

Do **not** try to make homemade infant formula. It can put your infant's health at serious risk. Commercial infant formula contains many important nutrients that can't be recreated at home. Follow label instructions for preparing infant formula.

Do **not** dilute or water down your infant formula to extend its use. This dilutes the nutritional content of the formula and can put your infant's health at risk.



Other beverages are **NOT** substitutes for infant formula. This includes:

- cow's milk
- goat's milk
- evaporated milk
- Fortified or unfortified plant-based beverages (like soy, oat, rice, almond, coconut, cashew)

These substitutes do not meet the nutritional needs of infants.

There is also generally no need to keep using formula if your child is healthy and over 12 months old.

Learn more: [Infant nutrition](#)

## About the shortage

On February 17, 2022, Abbott initiated a voluntary recall of powder infant formulas produced at its facility in Sturgis, Michigan.

The facility supplied a large amount of powdered infant formulas in the US, Canada and many other countries. Its closure has worsened a global shortage of infant formula.

The plant re-opened on July 1, 2022. Infant formula will gradually become available in the coming months, starting with specialized infant formula.



Health Canada is monitoring the availability of specialized infant formula products closely. We meet regularly with manufacturers, distributors, retailers and the health care community to:

- raise awareness
- facilitate increased production
- identify products for import from other countries
- explore ways to reduce or eliminate barriers to providing rapid and fair access to specialized infant formula

### Learn more about:

- [Certain Abbott brand powdered infant formula products recalled due to Cronobacter sakazakii and Salmonella](#)

## RELATED INFORMATION

- [Babies and gastroesophageal reflux disease \(Caring for Kids\)](#)
- [Nutrition for healthy term infants: Recommendations from birth to 6 months](#)
- [Nutrition for healthy term infants: Recommendations from 6 to 24 months](#)

For more information, please visit:  
[canada.ca/infant-formula-shortage](https://canada.ca/infant-formula-shortage)