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## Baby Formula Shortage

Many families rely on formula to feed their babies and have found shortages of formula in stores. The shortage is due in part to the [recall](#) of formula manufactured by Abbott Nutrition that may be contaminated with *Salmonella* or *Cronobacter*, two pathogens that are extremely harmful to infants. The facility that made the formula (located in Sturgis, Michigan) has been temporarily closed and this is affecting supply. Problems within the distribution chain have also contributed to the shortage. It has been suggested the existence of a limited number of companies that make baby formula is also contributing to the problems. (Four companies make 90% of the US supply, with Abbott the largest producer.) There are ~20 specialty formulas that ONLY Abbott makes and for which the Sturgis, Michigan facility is a key supplier. These specialty formulas are used by about 5,000 infants as well as some older children and adults with rare metabolic diseases.

The federal and state governments are working to improve the formula supply. They are encouraging all formula manufacturers to increase production, allowing flexibility in government regulations to make certain formula types or sizes more readily available, and monitoring the market to try and prevent price gouging. However, there is not consensus on when supplies will return to normal.

Health professionals, including the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), have provided recommendations for parents struggling to find the formula they need. Below is a summary of recommendations, with links for more information.

\*If available to you, look for alternate sources of formula than your traditional shopping places, including smaller stores and drug stores, online directly from the manufacturer, or an online retailer such as Amazon. Do not buy the formula from a third-party reseller, or individuals on the internet. Do not order formula from outside the US; this formula may not be regulated, may not be labelled correctly, and may not contain what your baby needs.

\*Speak to your baby's health care provider to see if there is another formula than the one you usually use, which would be a suitable replacement for your baby. A similar type of formula from another major company or a generic version may be available. Organic versions of baby formula have been more widely available, as have liquid (vs powdered) formula, although both may be more costly. Some babies (and for some diseases, children and adults) need specialty formulas due to allergies or other medical conditions; health care providers are best to help find the formulas for these individuals.

\*In some communities, donor human milk may be available through milk-sharing organizations. Do not buy human milk on the internet.

\*A health care provider may work with families to provide an older infant with whole milk or toddler milk. Talk to your baby's provider before pursuing this option.

\*Ask your baby's health care provider if your baby is ready (generally at about 6 months) to eat solid foods, and the best first foods to give.

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\*Many families rely on the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program for formula benefits each month... The federal and state governments are providing more flexibility in the types of formula families using WIC can purchase. Families should contact their local WIC clinic to find out their options for purchasing formula.

\*Food banks may have formula, and families can also call [211](#), which is a resource for local, essential community services.

\*The government has a website dedicated to helping families find formula: [Fact Sheet: Helping Families Find Formula During the Infant Formula Shortage](#)

\*Do not water down baby formula, and do not try to make homemade formula. Both of these practices may cause nutritional or other health problems for your baby. Make sure to follow the directions on formula packaging to mix the formula, and pay attention to [food safety practices](#) when making, using and storing formula.

\*While the supply issue is addressed, do not purchase more formula than what you will need for a 2 week supply, so that other families can also find the formula they need for their babies.

\*Women using baby formula should not be shamed or told to breastfeed. There are many reasons babies aren't breastfed, including health concerns of mothers or infants, and lack of support. It is important that families needing help receive what they need to keep their babies healthy. Any women currently breastfeeding should be supported to continue.