



Michigan WIC Formula Shortage Talking Points 05/27/2022

As the formula shortage persists, WIC clients may increasingly ask questions about alternatives to infant formula. Please see below for a summary of suggested staff talking points, nutrition education and referral considerations, and resources.

Talking Points:

- This is a real problem and there is no perfect solution. You are not alone.
- Michigan WIC has added many alternatives to increase the chance you can find something at the store.
- If you cannot find your preferred formula brand, check the [temporary choices for powdered formulas list](#) and try to find another at local stores.
- The most important thing parents can do is feed your baby. It may be tough right now, and an alternative might not be your preference. Give yourself some grace.
- Regular formulas are enough alike that most healthy babies can switch formulas without problems.
- Be patient, as it may take some time for your baby to get used to a new formula. If you have questions about whether your baby is tolerating the new formula, let us know or contact your health care provider.
- Some families have more challenges, like lack of transportation to visit multiple stores.
- Contact your health care provider or WIC clinic if you feel like you've run out of options.
- **Do not** feed your baby homemade formula. This is unsafe and will not meet your baby's nutrient needs.
- **Do not** water down or dilute formula to stretch it out. This should never be done. Adding extra [water](#) to formula can dilute the levels of protein and minerals, and lead to low sodium levels in the blood and other electrolyte disorders that may require hospitalization.
- **Do not** feed your baby cow's milk, goat's milk, or plant-based milk until they are at least one year of age, as these milks lack nutrients and can cause digestive issues. In rare, emergency situations, whole cow's milk can be given to healthy babies over 6 months-old, for no more than 1 week, if supported by your health care provider.
- Those pregnant, breastfeeding, or looking to delay weaning can find additional resources at: [Breastfeeding Support During an Infant Formula recall](#).



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Nutrition Education and Referral Considerations

1. Encourage formula as the best alternative to breast milk for infants less than 1 year old. Review the [Michigan WIC Temporary Choices for Powder Formula](#) to explore formula options for the infant.
2. Offer breastfeeding support and resources as indicated.
3. Discourage the use of homemade baby formula, diluted/'watered down' formula, cow's milk and other milk alternatives as these can be dangerous, and lack key nutrients needed for healthy growth.
4. For clients asking about acceptable alternatives if they cannot find formula, refer them to their health care provider to determine appropriateness.
5. If you learn an infant is receiving cow's milk before one year of age, refer the family to their health care provider to discuss:

a. Duration of cow's milk use, age-appropriateness, fat level, and amount.

Note: Probe further to confirm and educate as needed that cow's milk is only to be used:

- For a brief periods of time (no more than 1 week)
 - For infants older than 6 months of age
 - As whole milk
- b. Provision of plenty of iron-containing solid foods, such as baby food made with meat or iron-fortified cereals. [Refer to this reference for sources of iron.](#)
- c. Health risks, such as anemia, with longer-term use of cow's milk.
6. Contact Brooke Perry (PerryB11@michigan.gov) to explore options when formula scarcity is severe in a specific area.

Resources:

- [With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any? - HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [Is Homemade Baby Formula Safe? - HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [FDA Advises Parents and Caregivers to Not Make or Feed Homemade Infant Formula to Infants | FDA](#)
- [Iron | Nutrition | CDC](#)
- [ABM Statement on Shortage of Breastmilk Substitutes \(bfmed.org\)](#)