Choosing the Right Formula for your Baby

Which formula is right for my baby?

- When choosing the right formula for your baby your family doctor will probably suggest a formula made from cow’s milk.
- Some formulas are iron-fortified (they have extra iron in them) while other formulas have very little iron or none at all.
- Most doctors recommend using an iron-fortified formula. Some formulas are made from soy milk instead of cow’s milk. If your baby seems to be allergic to formula made from cow’s milk, your doctor may suggest using a soy-milk formula.
- If you are not breastfeeding, you should use infant formula during the first year of your baby's life. (cow milk and soy milk are not the same as infant formula made from these)
- Regular cow’s milk and regular soy milk do not contain all of the nutrients that your baby needs to grow and develop.
  - Infants younger than 1, who drink regular cow’s milk or regular soy milk, are at risk for problems associated with low iron.  
Formulas are sold in different forms.
- Ready-to-use are the most expensive but no mixing is required
- Concentrated liquid is less expensive than ready-to-use. You mix formula with an equal amount of water to prepare for feeding
- Powder is the least expensive. The formula is in powder form requiring that one to mix one level scoop of powdered formula with two (2) ounces of water and stir well.

Different Types of Infant Formulas available on the shelf:
- Starter formulas which are designed for babies 0-6 months
- Follow on formulas which are offered for babies older than 6 months.

Standard Infant Formulas
The American Academy of Pediatrics AAP recommends iron-fortified formulas for all infants.

Cow’s Milk Based Formulas – (Choose Iron-fortified)
- These types of formulas are made with cow’s milk that has been altered to resemble breast milk.
- By using cow’s milk it gives the formula the right balance of nutrients and makes the formula easier to digest.
- The majority of babies do well on cow’s milk formula, however some babies, that are allergic to the proteins in cow’s milk need other types of infant formula.

Step 2 Formulas
- These formulas (cow’s milk or soy based) are designed to provide nutrients for babies 6 months and older. These formulas usually contain a higher level of calcium to meet the increasing needs of older babies.
**Soy-based Formulas**

- Soy infant formulas don’t contain cow’s milk protein or lactose (sugar found in milk) and are intended for babies with particular health problems such as lactose intolerance or cow’s milk allergy.
- About 50% of babies who are allergic to cow’s milk protein will also react to soy protein. (In result a special low-allergy formula will need to be prescribed by a doctor).

**Specialty Infant Formulas**

These formulas are only prescribed when the baby has a specific health condition such as heart disease, malabsorption, an inability to digest fats or other conditions that neither regular milk-based or soy formula can address the problem properly.

- They also may have basic nutrients (usually the protein and/or carbohydrate) that have been changed to an alternative nutrient so that infants can tolerate the formula better.
- **Allergy**: Protein hydrolystate or extensively hydrolyzed formulas (‘Predigested’)
  - These are meant for babies who have a milk or soy allergies. Protein hydrolysate formulas are easier to digest and less likely to cause allergic reactions than are other types of formula. They're also called hypoallergenic formulas.
  - The protein content of these formulas have been broken down or ‘predigested’. These types of formulas are usually 3 times more expensive than standard formulas. Switching to these formulas after cow’s Milk Based Formula can be difficult because it is bitter. Keep trying and the infant will take it.
- **Acid Reflux**: Thickened Formulas
  - This type of formula will thicken by itself once it reaches the stomach; hence minimizing the possibility of regurgitation.
  - Some pediatricians may also recommend soy or extensively hydrolyzed formulas for babies with acid reflux.
- **Acute Diarrhea**: Lactose-free formulas
  - Lactose-free formulas are often tried when a baby has symptoms of lactose intolerance, such as excessive bloating, gas, diarrhea, a red burn-like rash around the anus, and abdominal cramping.
- **For Premature babies**: Premature Discharge formulas
  - These types of formulas are recommended for premature babies because they provide more calories, higher levels of protein, vitamins and minerals to infants who need these nutrients.

**How do I know if I need to switch to a different formula?**

With so many different formulas to choose from it may be hard to decide which the right one for your baby is. Sometimes it may even be necessary to change the kind of formula you give to your baby. Reasons for switching baby formula include food allergies, a baby’s need for more...
iron, extreme fussiness, or diarrhea. However, these signs may not be related to the formula and for that reason, a change may not help or could make baby's symptoms worse. That's why you should always talk to your baby's doctor before changing infant formulas. Call your doctor if your baby has any of these symptoms:  

- Dry, red and scaly skin
- Diarrhea
- Extreme fatigue or weakness
- Forceful vomiting
- More crying or fussiness after a feeding
- Excessive gas and very loose, watery poop.

**Formulas and later food preferences**

Research has shown that the type of formula used influences a child's flavor preferences later in life. Infants on formulas do not have the varying flavors in their diet like breastfed infants so sometimes their food choices are more limited. Compared to children who were fed milk-based formulas, children fed protein hydrolysate formulas are more likely to prefer sour-flavored juices and broccoli, as well as the odor and flavor of formulas, and less likely to make negative facial expressions when trying new foods. These formulas are bitter tasting which influences later preferences. Infants who were fed soy formulas prefer bitter-flavored apple juice.

**Resources:**

- **Books**
  - 2004: Infant Feeding and Nutrition for Primary Care, By: Donald Bentley, Sophie Aubrey, Melissa Bentley
  - 1993: The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby--From Birth to Age Two, By William Sears (M.D.), Martha Sears

- **Websites**

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