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Health Advisory: CDPH Advises Parents and Caregivers Against Making or Feeding Homemade Infant Formula to Infants

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Situation Summary

The impacts of the ongoing pandemic and the recent 2022 Abbott recall of certain powdered infant formula has led to periodic location- and product-based shortages of major brands of infant formula. The infant formula supply chain disruptions have affected all infant formula consumers in the state of California; parents and caregivers may be seeking to increase dilution of existing formula or use homemade infant formula recipes to feed infants.

[The United States Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) on February 21, 2021 issued a health advisory against using recipes to make homemade infant formula.](#)

Using homemade infant formula can lead to significant health problems for infants. An infant's nutritional needs are very specific, especially in the first year of life. Homemade infant formula may contain too little or too much of certain components, such as vitamins and minerals (like iron). Homemade infant formula may also have an increased risk of contamination, which could lead to infants becoming ill or developing an infection.

Background

In the advisory released last year, the FDA stated the following reasons why parents and caregivers should not to make and feed their infants homemade formula:

Infant formula as the sole source of nutrition for infants and is strictly regulated by the FDA. The FDA has requirements for certain nutrients in infant formula, and if the formula does not contain these nutrients at or above the minimum level or within the specified range, the infant formula is adulterated. Homemade infant formula recipes have not been evaluated by the FDA and may lack nutrients vital to an infant's growth.

The FDA generally regulates commercially available infant formula, which are marketed in liquid and powder forms, but typically does not regulate recipes for homemade formula. The FDA does not recommend that parents and caregivers make infant formula at home because of serious health and safety concerns. The potential problems with homemade formulas include contamination and absence of or inadequate amounts of critical nutrients.



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These problems are very serious, and the consequences range from severe nutritional imbalances to foodborne illnesses, both of which can be life-threatening. Because of these severe health concerns, the FDA strongly advises parents and caregivers not to make and feed their infants homemade infant formula.

Recommendations

Practice Safe Infant Formula Preparation

Infants need a specific balance of nutrients. To protect infant health, use products that meet federal standards that ensure formula is not only as close as possible to human milk as possible but safe and free of harmful bacteria. Infant formula should be prepared according to the package directions.

In order to prevent illness in infants, parents and caregivers are advised to **avoid to the extent possible** the following actions listed below.

- Watering down formulas by adding more water when mixing powdered formula or adding extra water to ready-to-serve, non-concentrated liquid formula.
- Making a homemade formula from ingredients at the store, such as powdered cow milk or raw milk and sugar.
- Feeding infants under one-year-old cow milk or other milk [substitutes](#) from the dairy section of the grocery store, such as almond or soy beverages (sometimes labeled as milk).
- Using imported formulas from other countries that are not reviewed by the FDA.

Parents or caregivers of infants who have consumed a homemade infant formula should contact their healthcare provider to receive further care and guidance; and providers should report any illnesses or symptoms possibly related to the formula dilution or substitution to their local Health Department so that further public health assistance can be provided.

How to Find Infant Formula in Stores

CDPH recommends the following to parents and caregivers seeking to purchase infant formulas in stores:

- Call the store directly and ask if the formula you need is available or when they will get some.
- Parents and caregivers using benefits from the California WIC program should use their formula benefits early. More trips to the store may be required. The store may limit how many cans of formula purchased at one time. WIC can also support eligible partially breastfeeding parents and caregivers increase their breastmilk supply and with use of breast pumps. Additional WIC updates are available [online](#) or on MyFamily.WIC.ca.gov.
- Ask a health care provider for guidance on alternative formulas you could use.

Parents and caregivers can also consult the resources contained in the United States Department of Health and Human Services [Fact Sheet: Helping Families Find Formula During the Infant Formula Shortage](#) for assistance in finding infant formula.

[The FDA provides regular updates](#) on the investigation at the Abbott Sturgis, MI production facility. The last update was March 31, 2022. Subscribe to updates from the FDA to receive reliable and timely information. The FDA also provides a [consumer-friendly webpage](#) about the recall and formula safety.

For infants under three months, born prematurely, or who have a weakened immune system, both the FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are currently recommending additional precautions.

For More Information

California Department of Public Health/Women, Infants and Children Program

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DWICSN/Pages/Information-for-WIC-Families-on-Infant-Formula-Availability.aspx>.

United States Food and Drug Administration

- [FDA: FDA Advises Parents and Caregivers to Not Make or Feed Homemade Infant Formula to Infants](#)
- [FDA: Infant Formula: Safety Do's and Don'ts](#)
- [FDA: Questions & Answers for Consumers Concerning Infant Formula](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [CDC: Powdered Infant Formula Preparation and Storage](#)

United States Department of Agriculture

- [USDA: Infant Formula Safety](#)
- [AAP: Recommendations for Finding Infant Formula during the Shortages](#)
- [AAP: Is Homemade Baby Formula Safe?](#)