

How to Choose a Formula



If you have walked down the formula aisle at the grocery store recently, you may have noticed what a vast array of choices there are. Trying to decide which formula is best for your baby can be overwhelming. As your baby's medical provider, The Youth Clinic is happy to provide guidance on this topic. Keep in mind that every baby is different, so we encourage that you ask your provider about recommendations that are specific to your child. Here is a brief overview of several basic types of formula.

Cow's Milk-Based Formulas

Cow's milk-based formulas account for about 80% of formulas sold today. Although cow's milk is used to make these formulas, it is treated by heating and other methods to make the protein more digestible and safe for infant consumption. Lactose (milk sugar) is added to make the concentration equal to that of breast milk. Butterfat is removed and replaced with vegetable oils/other fats that are more easily digestible and better promote infant growth. Cow's milk-based formulas are iron-fortified; iron is a necessary mineral for infant growth and development. Most formulas also have DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and ARA (arachidonic acid) added to them; these are fatty acids believed to be important for brain and eye development. Some formulas are fortified with prebiotics, oligosaccharides that mimic the natural human milk oligosaccharides, substances that promote a healthy intestinal lining. Others are fortified with probiotics, "good bacteria." Some cow's milk-based formulas are labeled "sensitive" or "gentle"; typically these formulas either have a reduced amount of lactose (Similac Sensitive, Enfamil Sensitive), partially hydrolyzed (broken down) milk proteins (Gerber Gentle, Plum Organics Gentle, or a combination of both reduced lactose and partially hydrolyzed proteins (Similac Total Comfort, Enfamil Gentlease, Gerber Soothe); these may reduce gassiness/fussiness in some babies.



Hypoallergenic/Hydrolyzed Formulas

Hydrolyzed formulas (Nutramigen ,Alimentum) are also cow's milk-based but the milk proteins have been broken down into much smaller proteins that can be more easily digested. There are also amino acid based formulas (Elecare, Neocate). These formulas are typically used in infants who cannot tolerate regular cow's milk-based proteins due to allergies or milk-protein intolerance. There is some evidence that the use of these formulas can help prevent allergies/eczema in infants who are not breastfed and are at high risk of developing these conditions (i.e. due to a strong family history of food allergies/eczema). However, these formulas tend to be expensive.

Soy Formulas

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that there are few circumstances in which soy formula should be chosen instead of cow's milk-based formula in term infants. One of these situations is in infants with a rare disorder called galactosemia, which is tested for on the state newborn screen.

Specialized Formulas

Specialized formulas are manufactured for premature babies and infants with specific disorders/diseases. Your provider will advise you if your baby needs one of these formulas.

The American Academy of Pediatrics website

(<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/default.aspx>) has many helpful articles regarding formula feeding, including:

- Amount and schedule of formula feedings
- Forms of baby formula: powder, liquid concentrate, ready-to-feed
- Tips on purchasing infant formula
- How to safely prepare formula
- How to sterilize and warm bottles safely
- Is homemade baby formula safe?
- Probiotics in formula

