

# 2022 Baby Formula Shortage: Partner Toolkit



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## How to use this toolkit

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) developed this toolkit to help partners communicate with families about the 2022 infant formula shortage.

Use the following content as-is or customize it to address your audience’s needs. You can also insert your own resources to these templates as needed. If you have any questions, please contact Eloise S.L. Harris, DOH Communications Consultant, at [eloise-rose.harris@doh.wa.gov](mailto:eloise-rose.harris@doh.wa.gov).

## Resources

- [Resources for Families Impacted by the Infant Formula Shortage. \(Español\)](#)
  - This webpage is expected to be available by early to mid-June in 14 other languages, including Somali, Ukrainian, and both traditional and simplified Chinese.

- [Infant formula shortages: What to do if you're impacted](#). News release, May 18, 2022. ([Español](#))
- [WIC Authorized Infant Formula](#). ([Español](#))

## Talking Points

### Washington's infant formula supply remains fragile.

- The formula shortage started with the pandemic, and has grown due to:
  - Supply chain issues;
  - The February [recall](#) of several [baby formulas](#) due to possible contamination, and;
  - The voluntary closure of a facility in Michigan by Abbott Laboratories - the country's largest manufacturer of infant formula.
- Though Abbott reached an [agreement](#) with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the steps needed to restart production, it will still be weeks before any formula from that facility becomes publicly available (early to mid-summer 2022).

### If you have concerns, contact your child's primary care provider. If you don't have one, call the Help Me Grow Hotline.

- Your child's doctor and care team are a great source of information for any questions or concerns about your baby's health and nutrition. They can help you switch to a formula that's easier to find, give tips on where to go to find formula, and help you know which formulas may be best for your baby.
- If you need a health care provider, call the **Help Me Grow WA hotline at 1-800-322-2588** for referrals and to apply for food and health resources in Washington.

### Additional support and resources are also available to WIC and SNAP participants.

- For WIC participants and families:
  - Contact [your local WIC clinic](#) for help finding infant formula.
  - WIC added a total of 60 different formula options since the recall began to offer more choices for families in the program.
  - If you can't reach your local clinic, call the state WIC office at 1-800-841-1410 Monday to Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.
  - Check the [Washington WIC web page](#) for more information on approved replacement infant formulas.
- Basic Food (SNAP) benefits:
  - Can be used to shop for infant formula at a variety of stores, including drugstores.
  - You can use the benefits to shop in person or online.
  - To find out if you're eligible to participate in SNAP, visit the [Parenthelp123 web page](#) or call 1-800-322-2588.

### Dos and don'ts for families

#### DO

- Contact your health care provider for guidance.
- Follow the formula manufacturer's preparation and storage instructions.
- If you aren't signed up for WIC, visit [Parenthelp123.org](#) or call 1-800-322-2588.

- Visit smaller stores and drugstores that carry formula. Call first to see if they have any in stock.

#### **DON'T**

- Don't make your own formula at home using recipes from the internet.
- Don't water down formula to make it last longer.
- Don't use formula for toddlers if your baby is younger than 1 year old.
- Don't use cow's milk unless your baby is older than 6 months, uses regular formula, and is eating iron fortified foods (jarred baby meats, iron fortified cereal). Only use for a short time (no more than one week) and talk to your health care provider.

#### **Impact on Washington WIC families**

- In January 2022, Washington WIC was already dealing with formula supply chain issues that were impacting families around the state. In February, when the formula manufacturer Abbott recalled several of their infant formula products, it made this shortage much worse.
- Over the winter, WIC created some emergency formula reserves in rural areas. This was mainly in areas having a hard time getting any formula shipments in due to the supply chain issues. Unfortunately, most of that emergency reserve was recalled.
- Washington WIC serves more than:
  - 120,000 women, infants, and children in 205 clinics each month.
  - 195,000 individuals each year.

Of those individuals served, 53,000 are infants and 15,000 of those infants are affected by the recall.

- As of late May 2022, families are still struggling to find formula in stores for their infants. There has been a significant drop in WIC formula redemption since the recall. WIC participants likely couldn't find all the formula they were issued before their benefit expired (30 days after being issued).
- Datasembly, which provides real-time product pricing and supply data, shows infant formula was out of stock at a rate above 40% in Washington state in May.
- Some families say they had to travel to three counties to find a store with their formula.
- As of late May 2020, Similac Advance was reported to be in good supply. This is the standard cow's milk formula that meets the nutritional needs of babies. Other formulas for babies who have sensitive stomachs, allergies, cultural needs, or other health conditions are still hard to find for many families.
- Calls for assistance (to Washington WIC clinics) continue to be high.

#### **Washington WIC Response**

- On short notice, Washington WIC added 60 formula options to the program to give as much flexibility to families as possible. Many of these options are also in short supply.

- The Washington state WIC team is working closely with local WIC staff to help families find infant formula options. State staff continue to provide guidance on the different formula options and any possible substitutions. This helps local staff discuss those options with caregivers.
- For example, the state WIC office created a handout called [Temporary Choices for Infant Formula](#). This tool helps WIC staff, health care providers, and caregivers know what's available on WIC during the recall. It also helps them choose a different formula if their formula isn't available. This handout is available in 15 different languages on the [Washington WIC formula webpage](#). When families report that they aren't finding what they need, WIC staff help search local stores. If no formula options are found, the state office will work with the local agency to have formula shipped to the clinic.
- State and local WIC staff play a key role in helping families find safe food for their babies, such as making on the spot changes to their WIC benefits while the family is in the store. This allows WIC families to use their WIC card to buy formula that is available in-store.
- Washington WIC also helped WIC programs in other states manage the technical aspects of adding different formula products to their computer systems.

### **Federal Response**

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Services, acted quickly. They smoothed the way for Washington WIC to request and receive waiver approval within 24 hours (normally takes up to 60 days).
- These waivers helped state WIC programs offer alternative formulas and better support families.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) hasn't provided information about plans to reopen the Abbott factory in Sturgis, Michigan, until recently. Though FDA reached an [agreement](#) with Abbott on the steps needed to restart production, it will still be weeks before any formula products from that factory become available in stores.
- Under [Operation Fly Formula](#), the U.S. will receive two shipments of overseas infant formula. In total, the U.S. will receive 1.5 million 8-ounce bottles of hypoallergenic formulas. The first part of this shipment arrived on Sunday May 22. This formula is being distributed to hospitals and home care centers.
- The federal government's actions should be helpful to families affected by the shortage. This situation will hopefully lead to long-term structural changes to WIC that will prevent this vulnerability in the future.

### **WIC Formula Contract**

- Federal rules require state WIC programs to comply with competitive contracting practices for standard infant formula.

- Through the competitive contracting process, state WIC programs will mainly have one formula manufacturer who provides the standard cow’s milk-based and soy-based formulas.
- The competitive contracting process helps WIC programs save money by receiving a rebate from the formula manufacturer (who is the contractor) for each can of standard formula purchased by WIC participants. This rebate saves taxpayers money, and states use the savings to provide WIC benefits to more participants.

## Frequently Asked Questions

The nationwide infant formula shortage has caused stress for many families. The information below can help families who are trying to find food that supports their baby’s nutrition and comes from the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#), [the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), [the Washington WIC program](#), [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), and [the U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#).

### What should I do if I can’t find formula for my baby?

Your baby’s doctor, nurse, or clinic is the best source of information on your baby’s nutrition. Please contact them if you have any concerns.

If you participate in WIC:

- Contact [your local WIC clinic](#) for help finding infant formula. WIC now provides more types of formula to give families more choices.
- If you can’t reach your local clinic, call the state WIC office at 1-800-841-1410 Monday to Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.
- Check the [Washington WIC web page](#) for more information on approved WIC infant formulas.

Basic Food (SNAP) benefits can be used to shop for infant formula at a variety of stores, including drugstores. You can use the benefits to shop in person or online. To find out if you’re eligible to participate in SNAP, visit the [Parenthelp123 web page](#) or call 1-800-322-2588.

All other families can:

- Check smaller stores and drugstores or buy online from name-brand stores and pharmacies.
- Contact manufacturers directly:
  - Use Gerber’s [MyGerber Baby Expert](#) to reach a certified nutrition or lactation consultant by phone, text, Facebook Messenger, web chat, or video call. They can help you identify a similar formula that may be more readily available.
  - Call Abbott’s consumer hotline: 1-800-986-8540
  - Use Abbott’s [urgent product request form](#): Ask your OBGYN or your baby’s doctor, nurse, or clinic to submit an urgent product request through Abbott.
  - Call Mead Johnson/Reckitt’s customer service line: 1-800 BABY-123 (222-9123)
- Check out community resources:

- [Find your nearest Community Action Agency \(CAA\)](#). Your neighborhood CAA may be able to give you formula or connect you with local agencies that have formula in stock.
  - Call United Way's [2-1-1](#): dial 2-1-1 to be connected to a community resource specialist at United Way. They may be able to help you find food pantries and other places where you can get low or no cost infant formula and baby food.
  - Call [your local food bank](#) to ask if they have infant formula in stock.
  - Ask your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic about donated milk. With a prescription, you may be able to get safe donated breast milk from the [Northwest Mother's Milk Bank](#).
- In this urgent situation, the American Academy of Pediatrics says it's OK for most babies to switch to any available formula, including store brands, unless your baby needs a specialty formula. If your baby is on a specific [extensively hydrolyzed](#) or amino acid-based formula such as Elecare, ask your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic about other options.
  - Ask your OBGYN or your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic if they have formula samples on hand that they can provide.

### **Is it safe to add more water to formula to make it last longer?**

- No. You should always follow instructions on the packaging, and the information your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic gives you. Diluted formula is dangerous and can cause your baby to not get enough nutrition. That can cause serious health problems.

### **Can I make homemade formula?**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly advises against making your own baby formula. Homemade formula is not safe and does not give your baby enough nutrition. Some infant deaths have been linked to homemade formulas.

### **Can I get imported baby formula?**

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken steps to increase the supply of imported baby formula. On May 16, [the FDA said imported products that meet safety and nutrition standards could arrive in the U.S. in the coming weeks](#).

### **Can I feed toddler formula to my baby?**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend toddler formulas for babies. But the AAP says if you have no other choice, toddler formula is safe to use for a few days for babies close to one year old.

### **Can I use premature formula for my full-term baby?**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says formulas made for premature babies are safe for full-term babies for a few weeks if nothing else is available.

### **Can I give my baby cow's milk instead of infant formula?**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says that for babies older than 6 months who take regular (not specialty) formula, whole cow's milk may be an option for a short period of time (no longer than one week). AAP says it's not ideal and should not be given longer than one week. When giving cow's milk, it is important to make sure your baby is getting enough iron to prevent

[anemia](#). It's also important to give your baby plenty of iron-containing foods, such as jarred baby meats or iron-fortified cereals. If you need to give your baby whole cow's milk for a week during the shortage, talk with your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic.

### **Can I feed my baby goat's milk?**

- Goat's milk is not approved for babies in the United States. However, some countries have approved baby formulas made from goat milk. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration may consider allowing those products to be imported during this shortage.

### **Can I give my baby a plant-based milk?**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says plant-based milk alternatives are not recommended for babies under one year old. The AAP says in an emergency, you can give soy milk to a baby who is close to one year old for no more than a week, but the soy milk should be fortified with protein and calcium. Be sure to switch back to formula as soon as it's available again.
- Do not give your baby almond milk or other plant milks. These often do not have enough protein and minerals for your baby.
- Talk to your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you're thinking of using a plant-based milk.

### **My baby needs a specialty formula that was recalled by Abbott. What should I do?**

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has said that [it will allow Abbott to release some specialty and metabolic formulas](#) from the company's factory in Sturgis, Michigan in certain situations. If your baby needs one of those formulas, ask your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic about getting the product.

### **Is it possible to start breastfeeding if I've been feeding my baby formula?**

- Breastfeeding after a long pause or starting breastfeeding after never having done it is possible, but it does take time and effort. [La Leche League International has resources](#) on how to stimulate milk supply.

## **Social Media**

### **Facebook/Instagram/Twitter (English)**

1. Families across Washington are being affected by a baby formula shortage. Want to learn more about what you can do? Read our news release for the latest information and resources. <https://doh.wa.gov/newsroom/infant-formula-shortages-what-do-if-youre-impacted>
2. Is the baby formula shortage affecting your family? Read our news release for more information and to learn more about what you can do for your child's nutrition. <https://doh.wa.gov/newsroom/infant-formula-shortages-what-do-if-youre-impacted>

3. Affected by the baby formula shortage? We put together some resources to help. <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>
4. A baby formula shortage is causing stress for families across Washington, but there are things you can do for your child's nutrition. Visit our website for more information and resources that can help.
5. Worried about your child's nutrition during the baby formula shortage? Talk to your child's primary care provider. For help connecting with a provider, call the Help Me Grow WA hotline (1-800-322-2588, services in multiple languages).
6. Worried about your child's nutrition during the baby formula shortage? Talk to your child's primary care provider or call the Help Me Grow WA hotline (1-800-322-2588) for referrals and resources in multiple languages.
7. Many people are struggling to find baby formula right now because of a nationwide shortage. Talk to your child's doctor if you're concerned about their health. Need a referral? The Help Me Grow WA hotline (1-800-322-2588) can connect you with a provider.
8. Are you on WIC and struggling to find baby formula? Contact your local WIC Clinic.
9. Many people are struggling to find baby formula right now because of a nationwide shortage. If you need help, check out our resources for families or contact your child's primary care provider. <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>
10. Have questions about feeding your baby during the formula shortage? Visit our website for more information and answers to common questions.
11. We're experiencing a nationwide baby formula shortage, and families are wondering what to do next. We're sharing some resources to help you find food that supports your baby's nutrition. Visit our website to learn more. <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>

## Facebook/Instagram/Twitter (Spanish)

1. Las familias en todo Washington se están viendo afectadas por la escasez de fórmula para bebés. ¿Quieres saber más sobre lo que puedes hacer? Lea nuestro comunicado de prensa para obtener la información y los recursos más recientes. <https://doh.wa.gov/es/newsroom/escasez-de-leche-de-formula-que-hacer-si-se-ve-afectado>
2. ¿La escasez de fórmula para bebés está afectando a su familia? Lea nuestro comunicado de prensa para obtener más información y para obtener más información sobre lo que puede hacer por la nutrición de su hijo. <https://doh.wa.gov/es/emergencies/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>

3. ¿Afectado por la escasez de fórmula para bebés? Reunimos algunos recursos para ayudar. <https://doh.wa.gov/es/emergencias/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>
4. La escasez de fórmula para bebés está causando estrés a las familias en todo Washington, pero hay cosas que puede hacer por la nutrición de su hijo. Visite nuestro sitio web para obtener más información y recursos que pueden ayudar.
5. ¿Le preocupa la nutrición de su hijo durante la escasez de fórmula para bebés? Hable con el proveedor de atención primaria de su hijo. Para obtener ayuda para conectarse con un proveedor, llame a la línea directa help me grow WA (1-800-322-2588, servicios en varios idiomas).
6. ¿Le preocupa la nutrición de su hijo durante la escasez de fórmula para bebés? Hable con el proveedor de atención primaria de su hijo o llame a la línea directa de Help Me Grow WA (1-800-322-2588) para obtener referencias y recursos en varios idiomas.
7. Muchas personas están luchando para encontrar fórmula para bebés en este momento debido a la escasez en todo el país. Hable con el médico de su hijo si le preocupa su salud. ¿Necesita una referencia? La línea directa de Help Me Grow WA (1-800-322-2588) puede conectarlo con un proveedor.
8. ¿Estás en WIC y luchas por encontrar fórmula para bebés? Póngase en contacto con su clínica local de WIC.
9. Muchas personas están luchando para encontrar fórmula para bebés en este momento debido a la escasez en todo el país. Si necesita ayuda, consulte nuestros recursos para familias o comuníquese con el proveedor de atención primaria de su hijo. <https://doh.wa.gov/es/emergencias/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>
10. ¿Tiene preguntas sobre cómo alimentar a su bebé durante la escasez de fórmula? Visite nuestro sitio web para obtener más información y respuestas a preguntas comunes.
11. Estamos experimentando una escasez de fórmula para bebés en todo el país, y las familias se preguntan qué hacer a continuación. Estamos compartiendo algunos recursos para ayudarlo a encontrar alimentos que apoyen la nutrición de su bebé. Visite nuestro sitio web para obtener más información. <https://doh.wa.gov/es/emergencias/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>

## Hashtags

#InfantFormula #BabyFormula #FormulaShortage

## Spanish links to use

Resources: <https://doh.wa.gov/es/emergencias/current-hazards-and-issues/infant-formula-shortage>

News Release: <https://doh.wa.gov/es/newsroom/escasez-de-leche-de-formula-que-hacer-si-se-ve-afectado>

## Images





# Infant Formula Shortage

## What People Can Do

Amid the ongoing infant formula shortage, here are steps people can take to find food for their babies and keep them safe.



- ✓ Contact your health care provider for guidance.
- ✓ Follow the formula manufacturer's preparation and storage instructions.
- ✓ Contact your local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinic for help finding formula.
- ✓ If you aren't signed up for WIC, visit [Parenthelp123.org](https://www.parenthelp123.org) or call **1-800-322-2588**.
- ✓ Visit smaller stores and drugstores that carry formula. Call first to see if they have any in stock.

- ✗ **Do not** make your own formula at home using recipes from the internet.
- ✗ **Do not** water down formula to make it last longer.
- ✗ **Do not** use formula for toddlers if your baby is younger than 1 year old.
- ✗ **Do not** use cow's milk unless your baby is older than 6 months, uses regular formula, and is eating iron-fortified foods (jarred baby meats, iron-fortified cereal). Use for no more than a week and talk to your health care provider.



# Escasez de Fórmula Infantil

## Lo Que La Gente Puede Hacer

Debido a la continua escasez de fórmula infantil, las personas pueden tomar los siguientes pasos para encontrar alimentos para sus bebés y mantenerlos sanos.

### LO QUE PUEDE HACER

- ✓ Comuníquese con su proveedor de atención médica para obtener orientación.
- ✓ Siga las instrucciones de preparación y almacenamiento del fabricante de la fórmula.
- ✓ Comuníquese con la clínica local de Mujeres, Bebés y Niños (WIC por sus siglas en inglés) para obtener ayuda para encontrar la fórmula.
- ✓ Si no está inscrita en WIC, visite **Parenthelp123.org** o llame al **1-800-322-2588**.
- ✓ Visite las tiendas y farmacias más pequeñas que tienen leche de fórmula. Llame primero para ver si tienen disponibles.

### LO QUE NO DEBE HACER

- ✗ **No** haga su propia fórmula en casa utilizando recetas de Internet.
- ✗ **No** diluya la leche de fórmula para que dure más tiempo.
- ✗ **No** use leche de fórmula para niños más grandes si su bebé tiene menos de un año.
- ✗ **No** use leche de vaca a menos que su bebé tenga más de 6 meses, use fórmula regular y esté comiendo alimentos fortificados con hierro (carnes infantiles en frasco, cereales fortificados con hierro). Úsela no más de una semana y consulte a su médico



## Email Templates

### Parent/Family/Caregiver Email

Dear families and caregivers,

Amid the ongoing nationwide infant formula shortage, many families need more support for their child's nutrition. At **[Agency/organization name]**, we recognize how stressful this is for you and your family, and that there is a continued need for information sharing.

To help, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) created materials with information and answers to common questions. DOH also published a [news release](#) with more information about what

you can do if you are affected by the shortage and where you can find additional support. The news release includes:

- DOH's new [resource webpage for families impacted by the formula shortage](#)
- A list of tips and resources to help families find infant formula
- A hotline for health care referrals and help applying for food and health resources in Washington
- Information for WIC and SNAP participants and families

Contact your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have questions or concerns. They may be able to make recommendations about switching to a formula that's easier to find or give tips on where to go when your usual sources of formula are out of stock.

If you need to be connected with a health care provider, call the [Help Me Grow WA hotline](#) at 1-800-322-2588 for referrals and to apply for food and health resources in Washington.

For more information, please contact [\[agency/organization contact information\]](#) or visit [\[agency/organization webpage\]](#).

[\[Sender signature\]](#)

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).