



COUNTY OF ORANGE HEALTH CARE AGENCY PUBLIC HEALTH

To: Orange County Health Care Providers

Re: Supporting Orange County families with infants during the nationwide infant formula shortage

Situation:

A nationwide shortage of infant formula has been ongoing for several months. The shortage was initially due to COVID-19 pandemic related supply chain issues which were then compounded with a voluntary recall of some Abbott Nutrition products and ceasing of production in the Sturgis, Michigan plant due to possible association with some serious bacterial infections in infants. While a number of measures are being taken at the federal level and through CDPH/WIC to increase access to formula, intermittent and sporadic shortages have been reported. **Concerns about finding sufficient formula have led to reports of unsafe practice, such as diluting formula or using homemade formula.**

Health care providers should support parents and caregivers of infants by:

- Affirming parents' concerns.
- Reinforcing the messages for families and providing the resources below, including printed copies of the page or handouts as needed.
- Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding, including helping to arrange for breast pumps and facilitating lactation support, if needed.
- Assisting families with selecting alternative formulas and requesting specialty (therapeutic) formulas from the formula manufacturer.
- Evaluating mental health needs and making referrals for support as appropriate.
- Reporting any suspected or confirmed adverse clinical outcomes (such as hospital admission) that may be a result of inadequate infant nutrition due to the formula shortage to Orange County Health Care Agency at 714-834-8180 or epi@ochca.com.

Resources for health care providers:

- Guidance for Orange County Families with Infants during the Infant Formula Shortage
 - English: [Infant Formula Shortage - OC Health Care Agency \(everywomanoc.org\)](http://everywomanoc.org)
 - Spanish: [Escasez de fórmula infantil - Cada Mujer OC \(everywomanoc.org\)](http://everywomanoc.org)

- [Instructions for requesting formula from Abbott for patients with urgent health needs](#)
- [AAP experts offer advice on how pediatricians can help parents through formula shortage](#)
- [CHOC Formula Recall Substitution List](#)
- [Orange County WIC Clinics](#)
- [Orange County Breastfeeding Resources](#)
- CDPH: [Infant Formula \(ca.gov\)](#)
- WIC: [Information for WIC Families on Infant Formula Availability](#)
- USDA: [Information on Infant Formula Recall & Supply](#)

Guidance for Orange County Families with Infants during the Infant Formula Shortage

For Spanish version see [Escasez de fórmula infantil - Cada Mujer OC \(everywomanoc.org\)](#)

Pregnant/post-partum women, breastfeeding or considering breastfeeding:

- Continue to breastfeed if you are able and breastfeed more if you are combination feeding (breast/formula).
 - [Orange County resources for breastfeeding](#) are available
 - [Guidance on increasing milk supply](#)
- WIC can also support eligible partially breastfeeding parents/caregivers increase their breastmilk supply with use of breast pumps. Call [your issuing WIC agency](#) for more information.
- If you have ample supply, consider donating your breast milk to an accredited milk bank ([Mothers' Milk Bank](#) or [University of California Health Milk Bank](#)).
- If you have unused/unexpired formula you are not using, consider donating it to MOMS Orange County ([Give for Healthy Orange County Babies \(momsorangecounty.org\)](#) or call 714-972-2610).

Preparing formula safely:

- Infants need a specific balance of nutrients for their growth. Infant formula is strictly regulated by the FDA to not only be as close as possible to human milk, but also safe and free of harmful bacteria.
- Follow the mixing instructions on the label for the formula; do NOT overdilute the formula to stretch the quantity out.
- Avoid making or feeding homemade formula.
- Avoid feeding infants under one year of age cow milk (or other animal milk besides human milk) or other milk substitutes (such as almond or soy beverages).
- Avoid feeding infants toddler formula.
- Avoid using imported formulas from other countries that have not been reviewed by the FDA.

Finding formula:

- Call the vendor (store) ahead of time to see if they have the formula in stock.
- Try another store if the one you usually frequent is out of your formula.
- WIC clients:
 - Redeem your WIC benefits as soon as they are redeemable.
 - Note that more trips to the store may be required as there may be a limit on how many cans of formula may be purchased at one time.
- Contact [your issuing WIC agency](#) if you are unable to locate formula after trying several stores in your area.
- Non-WIC clients: Contact the Health Referral Line at 1-800-564-8448 if you are unable to locate formula after trying several stores in your area.
- Ask a health care provider for guidance on alternative formulas you can use. Babies usually tolerate alternative products except in the case of special therapeutic formula. For babies on therapeutic formula, your health care provider may be able to request limited amounts of formula directly from the manufacturer if there is an urgent health need.

Resources:

- Orange County local updates and resources: [Infant Formula Shortage - OC Health Care Agency \(everywomanoc.org\)](#)
- [Orange County WIC Clinics](#)
- [Orange County Breastfeeding Resources](#)
- [Helping Your Baby Adjust to a New Formula](#)
- [Feeling a little blue? Tired? On edge? Worried all the time? You are not alone..... - OC Health Care Agency \(everywomanoc.org\)](#)
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH): [Infant Formula \(ca.gov\)](#)
- CDPH Women, Infants, & Children (WIC): [Information for WIC Families on Infant Formula Availability](#)
- CDPH: [CDPH Advises Parents and Caregivers Against Making or Feeding Homemade Infant Formula to Infants](#)
- HealthyChildren.org: [With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any?](#)
- US Department of Health & Human Services: [Fact Sheet: Helping Families Find Formula During the Infant Formula Shortage](#)

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