

Provider Information

FF-N NUTRITION

OUTCOME: The patient/family will understand nutrition, as it relates to formula feeding.

STANDARDS:

1. Review the infant's specific age-related nutritional needs.
2. Discuss current nutritional habits. Assist the parent in identifying unhealthy nutritional habits.
3. Emphasize the importance of infant receiving formula up to the age of 1 year. **Refer to "CHN-N Nutrition".**
4. Emphasize the importance of full participation to the prescribed nutritional plan.
5. Explain that a formula fed baby over 6 months of age may need a fluoride supplement if the water used to prepare the formula is un-fluoridated tap water, bottled water, or filtered water.
6. Explain the dangers of giving feeding goat/cow milk before age of one year.
 - a. Discuss the recommended frequency and amounts of formula for the infant's individual needs.
 - b. Instruct parents to check with the infant's primary care provider before switching formula type.

Formula Feeding and Nutrition

Although experts believe breast milk is the best nutritional choice for infants, breastfeeding may not be possible for all women. For many women, the decision to breastfeed or formula feed is based on their comfort level, lifestyle, and specific medical considerations that they might have.

For mothers who are unable to breastfeed or who decide not to, infant formula is a good alternative. Some women feel guilty if they do not breastfeed. But if you feed your baby with a commercially prepared formula, be assured that your baby's nutritional needs will be met. And you will still bond with your baby just fine. After all, whether with breast milk or formula, feeding is an important time of connection between mother and baby.

The decision to breastfeed or formula feed your baby is a very personal one. But here are some points you may want to consider as you decide which is best for you and your new addition.

- Commercially prepared infant formulas are a nutritious alternative to breast milk, and even contain some vitamins and nutrients that breastfed babies need to get from supplements.

- Manufactured under sterile conditions, commercial formulas attempt to duplicate mother's milk using a complex combination of proteins, sugars, fats, and vitamins that would be virtually impossible to create at home. Therefore, if you do not breastfeed your baby, it is important that you use only a commercially prepared formula and that you do not try to create your own.
- In addition to medical concerns that may prevent breastfeeding, for some women, breastfeeding may be too difficult or stressful.

Here are a few other reasons women may choose to formula feed:

Convenience. Either parent (or another caregiver) can feed the baby a bottle at any time (although this is also true for women who pump their breast milk). This allows the mother to share the feeding duties and helps her partner to feel more involved in the crucial feeding process and the bonding that often comes with it.

Flexibility. Once the bottles are made, a formula-feeding mother can leave her baby with a partner or caregiver and know that her little one's feedings are taken care of. There is no need to pump or to schedule work or other obligations and activities around the baby's feeding schedule. And formula-feeding moms do not need to find a private place to nurse in public. However, if Mom is out and about with baby, she will need to bring supplies for making bottles.

Time and frequency of feedings. Because formula digests slower than breast milk, formula-fed babies usually need to eat less often than do breastfed babies.

Diet. Women who opt to formula feed do not have to worry about the things they eat or drink that could affect their babies.

Formula Feeding: The Challenges

As with breastfeeding, there are some challenges to consider when deciding whether to formula feed.

Organization and preparation. Enough formula must be on hand at all times and bottles must be prepared. The powdered and condensed formulas must be prepared with sterile water (which needs to be boiled until the baby is at least 6 months old). Ready-to-feed formulas that can be poured directly into a bottle without any mixing or water tend to be expensive.

Bottles and nipples need to be sterilized before the first use and then washed after every use after that (this is also true for breastfeeding women who give their babies bottles of pumped breast milk). Bottles and nipples can transmit bacteria if they are not cleaned properly, as can formula if it is not stored in sterile containers.

Bottles left out of the refrigerator longer than 1 hour and any formula that a baby does not finish must be thrown out. And prepared bottles of formula should be stored in the refrigerator for no longer than 24 to 48 hours (check the formula's label for complete information).

Some parents warm bottles up before feeding the baby, although this often is not necessary. The microwave should never be used to warm a baby's bottle because it can create dangerous "hot spots."

Instead, run refrigerated bottles under warm water for a few minutes if the baby prefers a warm bottle to a cold one. Or the baby's bottles can be put in a pan of hot water (away from the heat of the stove) with the temperature tested by squirting a drop or two of formula on the inside of the wrist.

Lack of antibodies. None of the important antibodies found in breast milk are found in manufactured formula, which means that formula does not provide the baby with the added protection against infection and illness that breast milk does.

Expense. Formula can be costly. Powdered formula is the least expensive, followed by concentrated, with ready-to-feed being the most expensive. And specialty formulas (i.e., soy and hypoallergenic) cost more — sometimes far more — than the basic formulas. During the first year of life, the cost of basic formula can run about \$1,500.

Possibility of producing gas and constipation. Formula-fed babies may have more gas and firmer bowel movements than breastfed babies.

Formula cannot match the complexity of breast milk. Manufactured formulas have yet to duplicate the complexity of breast milk, which changes as the baby's needs change.

Whatever nutritional option you choose, be sure to talk to your doctor about the choices available to help you make the decision that is best for both you and your baby.

Click here for a patient education handout on [Formula Feeding and Nutrition](#)

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