

## **For Health Professional Reference – Key Messages Response to Infant Formula Shortage Concerns During COVID-19 Pandemic**

Nutrition Services, AHS, March, 2020

### **Key Messages:**

- COVID-19 hasn't caused an infant formula shortage, but in some areas it may have led to shoppers stockpiling infant formula.
- It may take some time for stores to restock certain items and adjust their inventory.
- There are some actions parents can take if their usual brand or type is not available.

### **Infant Formula Guidance to Provide to Parents and Caregivers:**

#### **Purchasing:**

- Check formula manufacturers' websites for store locators. Usual brands & types of formula may be available at another store. Call first to check stock.
- Consider ordering infant formula directly from the manufacturer (when this option is available), or from other reputable/familiar retailers for home delivery. Order a Canadian brand of formula.
- Ask your pharmacy if they can order specific infant formulas.
- Purchase a reasonable amount of formula (e.g. 2 week supply); avoid stockpiling.

#### **Format and Preparation:**

Liquid concentrate or ready-to-feed formulas are the safest types because they're sterile until opened. Powdered infant formula is not sterile. It can be used for healthy term infants if it's prepared and handled properly.<sup>1,2</sup>

#### Handouts

[Safe Preparation of Infant Formula from Powder](#)

[Safe Preparation of Infant Formula from Liquid Concentrate](#)

- Handouts in 7 different languages are available at: [www.ahs.ca/nutritionhandouts](http://www.ahs.ca/nutritionhandouts)

Homemade infant formulas are not recommended as an alternative to breastmilk or commercial infant formula. For more information refer to the *Nutrition Guideline: [Homemade Infant Formula](#) or [Government of Canada – Safety of Homemade Infant Formulas in Canada](#).*

#### **Transitioning to a Different Formula:**

- If parents need to temporarily switch to a different type, it may take time (around 2 weeks) for the infant's digestive system to adapt. As with any change in diet, parents may notice a change in stool consistency, frequency, or color.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of something like constipation (bowel movements that are hard and dry, and may be difficult or painful to pass),<sup>4</sup> this is not a health concern.
- Introducing a new formula gradually may help with the transition, but is not necessary. For example, parents can try giving a bottle with a 3:1 ratio of the infant's previous formula and new formula respectively, and can gradually adjust the ratio over the course of a few days until the infant has fully transitioned to the new formula. It is important that each formula is prepared separately before combining in case mixing instructions are different.<sup>5</sup>

## References:

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- <sup>1</sup> Health Canada. Preparing and handling powdered infant formula [Internet]. 2010 Feb 15 [cited 2020 Mar 26]. Available from: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/infant-nourisson/pif-ppn-recommandations-eng.php>
- <sup>2</sup> Dietitians of Canada. Infant formula evidence summary. In: Practice-based evidence in nutrition [knowledge pathway online]. 2018 May 08 [cited 2020 Mar 26]. Available from: <http://www.pennutrition.com>. Access only by subscription.
- <sup>3</sup> Cole CR, Rising R, Lifshitz F. Consequences of incomplete carbohydrate absorption from fruit juice consumption in infants. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 1999;153(10):1098-102.
- <sup>4</sup> Loening-Baucke V. Prevalence, symptoms and outcome of constipation in infants and toddlers. J Pediatr. 2005 Mar;146(3):359-63.
- <sup>5</sup> World Health Organization. Infant and young child feeding. Model chapter for textbooks for medical students and allied health professionals [Internet]. 2009 [cited 2020 Mar 26]. Available from: <http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/9789241597494/en/index.html>