



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201 | [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)

Dear ACF partner,

There is nothing as important to parents and caregivers as the health and safety of their children, and the infant formula shortage has left many families feeling anxious and concerned about their options for safely feeding their infants. The Biden-Harris Administration—working together with agencies across the federal government, as well as with industry and retail entities— is working to address this shortage, which is due to pandemic-driven supply chain issues and worsened due to a voluntary [formula recall in February by Abbott Nutrition—one of the country’s largest formula producers—and the closure of its production facility in Sturgis, Michigan.](#)

Your programs play a critical role in supporting families, and it is vital to share messages and tips on how to manage formula shortages safely. This letter highlights important information and resources for concerned families in your state or community.

### **What is the Federal Government Doing?**

The Administration—working with agencies across the federal government—is working around the clock to address the shortage and help families access infant formula. Actions so far include:

- Through Operation Fly Formula, President Biden has directed the U.S. Department of Defense, HHS, and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to pick up formula that meets U.S. health and safety standards and airlift it from other countries to the U.S. The first Operation Fly Formula flight landed on Sunday in Indiana with more than 70,000 pounds of specialty formula, and an additional flight landed yesterday. Together, these two flights will have transported the equivalent of 1.5 million 8-ounce bottles of formula.
- The Administration has invoked the Defense Production Act, which enables U.S. formula manufacturers to be put first in line to receive the resources they need to increase production domestically. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has authorized the first two “priority orders,” which means two infant formula manufacturers can begin to add legally-binding language to their orders with suppliers that will give these formula manufacturers priority over other customers and allow them to speed up production.
- In addition, as part of the Consent Decree of Permanent Injunction negotiated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Michigan with Abbott Nutrition, Abbott has agreed to take corrective actions that will allow it to resume production at the facility in Michigan and get more formula on shelves.
  - Once production at the facility resumes, they will first focus on specialty formulas for infants with metabolic and other needs.
- FDA has also been meeting regularly with major infant formula manufacturers that have been working to maximize their production to meet new demands. [Read more about FDA’s actions.](#) The FDA has also encouraged importation of safe infant formula to further increase availability while

protecting the health of infants. For example, [the U.K.'s Kendal Nutricare will send about 2 million cans of formula to the U.S.](#), which will land on U.S. store shelves beginning in June.

- **USDA's Food and Nutrition Service** has offered flexibilities to WIC state agencies across the country, including tribes and territories, granting them [waivers](#) that allow stores to exchange recalled baby formula purchased with WIC benefits, allow certain WIC participants to receive a different brand of formula without a doctor's note, and allow WIC recipients to use their WIC benefits on a wider variety of products so that if certain sizes or types of formula are out of stock, they can use their benefits on those that are in stock. USDA has issued more than 200 waivers to give states maximum flexibility in their WIC programs so they can help families get the safe formula they need.

### **What Should We Tell Families?**

Here are some key messages for families:

- **Never dilute formula.** Diluting infant formula with water or other liquids can be dangerous and even life-threatening for babies, leading to a serious nutritional deficit and health issues.
- **Avoid homemade formula.** Homemade formulas often lack or have inadequate amounts of critical nutrients, and are not safe for infants.
- **Follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' guidance to understand whether cow's milk is appropriate.** Whether it is appropriate to [feed your baby whole cow's milk](#) varies by age and other considerations. Consult your child's pediatrician or the American Academy of Pediatrics for the latest information.
- **Use of substitute formulas is OK most of the time.** For most babies, if their regular brand of formula is not currently available, it is OK to substitute with a similar version. If you have questions about which formula is acceptable, or if you are still having difficulty finding formula, contact your child's pediatric provider or [WIC clinic](#).
- **Talk to your pediatrician about introducing complementary foods by 6 months** (and no earlier than 4 months). Learn more [here](#).
- **Talk to your doctor.** Consult your child's pediatrician if your baby or child requires a specialized formula and you need a recommendation for a comparable formula to use. Health care providers can also submit an urgent request for specialized formula to Abbott, a primary formula manufacturer. Abbott is releasing some specialty and metabolic formulas on a case-by-case basis.

Families can [contact their nearest Community Action agency](#), which may be able to provide formula or connect them with a local agency with formula in stock.

Below you will find a list of additional resources for families and programs with concerns and questions about the infant formula shortages and safety. Please visit [www.hhs.gov/formula](http://www.hhs.gov/formula) for the latest information, including resources for milk and formula banks, WIC offices, and guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We will continue to share information and resources as we learn more. Thank you for your continued work on behalf of children and families.

Sincerely,

January Contreras  
Assistant Secretary

### **Resources for Programs and Families**

- [FACT SHEET: President Biden Announces New Actions to Address Infant Formula Shortage](#)
- [Fact Sheet: President Biden Announces Additional Steps to Address Infant Formula Shortage](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Helping Families Find Formula During the Infant Formula Shortage | HHS.gov](#)
- [Keeping Infants Safe in Midst of Formula Shortages | USDA](#)
- [With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any? | HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [USDA WIC Flexibilities](#)
- [FDA Powdered Infant Formula Recall: What to Know](#)
- [Guidance to Follow if You're Having Trouble Finding Infant Formula](#)