

Changing from one formula to another with ease



Jane Barry is a registered nurse, midwife and credentialed children and young people's nurse. Jane has provided some practical tips on managing a change in infant formulas, based on her clinical practice.

There are a lot of different types of baby formulas. Most standard formulas are made from dried cow's milk and are altered so they suit a baby's digestion and support their growth. Cow's milk formulas suit most healthy, full-term babies. It is a better nutritional choice than formulas made from soy beans or goat's milk. Sometimes specialty formulas are recommended for babies with specific medical conditions. A health care professional's guidance is important before starting or stopping specialty formula.

Some babies are happy to drink any formula they're offered, but others are less ready to change. Formulas can vary in taste and it can take a few days for babies to get used to a new formula because of the changes in taste and what they like.

Slow change is best when changing from one formula to another. A sudden switch to a new brand or type of formula can cause fussiness, not wanting to feed and sometimes constipation.



Tips and hints you may find helpful. You can choose any of these options:

- Introducing one bottle of the new formula at your baby's first morning feed or when they seem really hungry. However, don't mix different formulas in the same bottle
- Offering the new formula in the morning feeds. This could reduce the chance of your baby being fussy in the evening
- Replacing one bottle each day with the new formula. Keep doing this for 4–5 days until your baby has completely changed over to the new formula
- Asking another trusted adult to offer your baby the bottle. Often babies associate feeding with one parent and a change in formula causes protests
- Avoiding changes to any other feeding associations, like where you sit to feed your baby, or the bottles and/or teats at the same time as changing formula. Too many changes at once can cause feeding confusion.

Sometimes the only option is to stop all bottles of old formula and start a new one. If they are fussy, follow your baby's feeding cues and give them time to get used to the change.



Common feeding behaviours when changing formula

- Some babies don't seem any different when their formula is changed
- They may feed more hungrily, drink more and be satisfied for longer between their feeds
- Changes in feeding times and their usual demands to be fed
- They may be more interested in their solid food, especially if they're not drinking as much formula
- Gagging and refusing to suck
- Changes in mouth movements and facial grimacing - this might continue until the baby gets used to the different taste and smell
- If they're not keen on the differences the baby may "mouth" the teat, chew it with their gums or even take a few sucks and then pause before they start sucking again
- Taking a few sucks at first and then once they taste the formula, they can start fussing and lose interest in feeding. Pulling away from the teat, turning their head to the side, closing their eyes, clasp their lips firmly together and pushing the bottle away with their hands are all signs they may not be interested in feeding
- Not accepting as much formula as they usually do. They may seem satisfied after a small amount and become easily distracted.



Common physical changes when changing formulas

- Change in bowel motions, especially, the colour, smell, frequency and consistency
- They may have an increase or decrease in possetting or vomiting
- Changes in the pattern of weight gain
- Some babies can be a little more unsettled for the first few days
- There may be changes in sleep and settling patterns especially if the baby is taking different volumes than before
- The baby might have a different smell, especially their breath
- They may develop a rash. Have your baby checked if you notice a rash or any other worrying symptoms.

Further information: For more information please contact your Child and Family Health Nurse, Lactation Consultant, GP or other health care professional.

Important statement: Breastfeeding is best for babies. It has benefits for the infant, such as reducing infection risk, and for the mother. It is important to have a healthy balanced diet in preparation for, and during breastfeeding. Infant formula is designed to replace breast milk when an infant is not breastfed. Breastfeeding can be negatively affected by introducing partial bottle-feeding, and reversing a decision not to breastfeed is difficult. Infant formula must be prepared and used as directed. Unnecessary or improper use of infant formula, such as not properly boiling water or sterilising feeding equipment, may make your baby ill. Social and financial implications, including preparation time and the cost of formula, should be considered when selecting a method of infant feeding.