

Preparing formula feeds and sterilising bottles

The World Health Organisation recommends babies are breastfed. If you do not or are unable to breastfeed, it is important to give your baby an infant formula if they are under 12 months old.

Formula must be prepared according to the instructions on the label and with utensils that are clean and sterile, for the first 12 months. Store sterilised equipment in a clean, covered container in the fridge. Re-sterilise every 24 hours, even if it has not been used.

HOW TO CLEAN BOTTLES AND TEATS

- 1 Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- 2 Discard leftover formula. Rinse bottles and teats in cold, running water.
- 3 Wash in hot, soapy water using a clean bottle brush. Squeeze soapy water through teat holes.
- 4 Rinse under cold, running water and squeeze water through teat holes again.
- 5 Equipment is now ready to sterilise.

STERILISATION OPTIONS

Boiling method

- 1 Place washed equipment in a large saucepan.
- 2 Cover with water, remove air bubbles.
- 3 Boil for five minutes once bubbles start rising.
- 4 Allow equipment to cool in the saucepan or use tongs to avoid scalds.

Chemical method

Antibacterial solutions or tablets used for disinfecting equipment can be bought at the supermarket or chemist. Follow instructions on the packet carefully when making up solution to ensure correct dilution. Equipment should be plastic or glass, as metal corrodes.

- 1 After cleaning, squeeze solution through teats and submerge all items. Remove all air bubbles and cover the container.
- 2 Follow the instructions for soaking time, starting from when the last item was added.
- 3 A good shake will rid items of any excess solution, do not rinse.
- 4 Wash container in hot soapy water. Make up fresh solution every 24 hours.
- 5 Store the concentrate and solution well out of the reach of children.

Microwave or electric steam sterilising units

Many units are now available and are suitable to use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

PREPARATION OF FORMULA FEEDS

- Use the feeding table on the container as a guide only, as your baby may need more or less than indicated. Your health professional can advise you.

- Use the exact number scoops to amount of water as instructed on the container. Using more or less powder than indicated can make your baby ill. Unboiled water and unsterilized bottles can also make a baby ill.
- Babies under six months old need a newborn formula.

Method

- Wash hands before preparing formula. Prepare formula in a clean area.
- Tap water is preferred for preparing infant formula. Bottled water can be used to prepare formula if unopened.
- Boil fresh drinking water. Let water sit for 30 minutes to cool.
- Ideally, formula should be prepared just before feeding. Otherwise refrigerate prepared formula and use within 24 hours.
- Always read the instructions to check the correct amount of water and powder needed. This may vary between different formulas.
- Always use the scoop provided in the can as scoop sizes differ between formulas.
- Pour the water into bottle first, then powder.
- Fill the measuring scoop with powder. Tap the scoop lightly to remove any air bubbles then level off the scoop.

- Take care to add the correct number of scoops to the water in the bottle. Do not add half scoops or more scoops than stated in the instructions.
- Cap bottle and shake well.

Storage

- Store made up formula at the back of fridge where it is coldest (not in the door) and use within 24 hours.
- Throw out any milk left in the bottle after one hour.
- Store cans of formula in a cool, dry place.
- Replace the plastic lid after opening and use contents within four weeks.
- When travelling, carry cooled, boiled water and formula powder separately. Mix only when needed.

SIGNS THAT A BABY IS FEEDING WELL

- Your baby is generally content, settles after most feeds and has a good colour and skin tone.
- Six to eight pale, wet, cloth nappies or five to six heavy, wet disposable nappies every 24 hours.

- Regular soft bowel motions.
- Weight gain.
- Should you experience difficulties, please ask your health professional for assistance.

SAFE BOTTLE FEEDING TIPS

- Most babies like bottles warmed to room temperature. The safest way to warm is to stand the bottle in warm water.
- Do not use a microwave to heat. It can heat the milk unevenly and burn your baby's mouth. Bottle warmers are safe but the bottle should not be left in the warmer for more than 10 minutes.
- Always check temperature of the feed by shaking a few drops on the inside of your wrist.
- Turn the bottle upside down to check the flow. Milk should drip steadily from the teat.
- Do not prop a bottle up for a baby to feed by themselves. They may cough or choke.
- Do not put a baby to sleep with a bottle. Your baby could choke and it may cause an ear infection and tooth decay.
- Hold your baby in your arms and look into their eyes while feeding them. This is important for brain development.

Contacts

- Your local Maternity Unit.
- Your Child and Family Health Centre.
- Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline
Ph: **1800 686 268**, 7 days a week, or visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- MotherSafe (Medications in Pregnancy & Lactation Service)
Ph: **(02) 9382 6539** or **1800 647 848** if outside the Sydney Metropolitan area.
- For a Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)
www.lcanz.org/find-a-consultant.htm
- After-hours telephone advice lines are listed in your baby's *Personal Health Record* (Blue Book).

References

Eat for Health, NHMRC Feeding Guidelines Information for Health Workers 2012.