



The US Infant Formula Shortage and the IBCLC®

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The IBCLC® may receive questions from anxious parents, the media, and puzzled healthcare providers regarding infant feeding options during an infant formula shortage. As infant feeding experts, the IBCLC® can offer the following information.

Parents can contact:

- Their infant's healthcare provider to ask what other formulas can be temporarily used as a substitute.
- A pediatrician or pediatric dietitian for formula recommendations and substitutions.
- An International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC®) for questions about re-lactation, increasing breastmilk production, donating excess milk to a nonprofit milk bank, and other sources for securing donated human milk as a replacement for formula.

Suggestions for finding formula:

- Use a different form or size of formula, such as ready-to-feed or concentrate.
- Check food pantries, smaller stores, pharmacies, and online. Purchase formula only from reputable retailers.
- Access formula companies' websites for a formula locator listing where to find formula within a designated radius of your zip code.
- Consider store brands or generic brands of formulas. These are also high-quality formulas and safe to feed your baby. Also consider lesser-known brands of infant formula.
- Use social media such as Facebook or the Nextdoor app for sources of formula.
- Access the [Free Formula Exchange](#), a nationwide mutual aid network connecting families who need formula to people who have formula to donate.

Guidance for families:

- If you are pregnant, strongly consider breastfeeding after birth of your baby. Learn all you can about breastfeeding before you deliver. Request a prenatal consult with an IBCLC® or speak to a breastfeeding peer counselor or educator. You can search for IBCLC® s and other breastfeeding help at www.zipmilk.org. You can search for an IBCLC® near you with the USLCA ["Find an IBCLC® "](#) website.
- If you are breastfeeding and have any questions, contact an IBCLC®. If partly breastfeeding, an IBCLC® can help you rebuild milk supply and reduce the need for formula supplements.
- If you have recently had a baby, you could consider re-lactation or start to breastfeed or express milk. This is not a quick fix; it may take time and is not for every family. Contact an IBCLC® for more information and assistance.
- Consider donating excess milk to a nonprofit human milk bank that is part of the [Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#) (HMBANA).
- If your baby has special dietary needs or severe formula intolerance and you can't locate a specialty formula, consider contacting a HMBANA milk bank to see if pasteurized donor human milk is available to you.

Cautions:

- Informal or peer-to-peer milk sharing is an option, but this is a parent-to-parent arrangement with no formal oversight. Parents and healthcare professionals should access the [statement on breastmilk sharing](#) from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine for safety recommendations on screening donors, safe milk handling practices, and guidance on home pasteurization.
- Purchasing expressed breastmilk can be unsafe and is generally not recommended.
- Several recipes for home made baby formula are circulating on social media. These recipes may not contain adequate nutrients, nutrients in the wrong amounts, undesirable nutrients, or the complete absence of certain nutrients.
- Avoid using plant-based milks as they may be deficient in iron, protein, and other nutrients and typically contain too much water.
- Purchasing infant formula online from other countries is an option, but these formulas have not been reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration for use in the United States. These formulas differ in composition from each other and may differ from US formulas. Some labels are not in English, making it difficult to understand ingredient lists and preparation instructions. Some may be deficient in certain nutrients.

Resources:

To locate an IBCLC®

ZipMilk - <https://www.zipmilk.org/>

US Lactation Consultant Association - <https://uslca.org/resources/find-an-IBCLC®/>

To locate a human milk bank

Human Milk Banking Association of North America - <https://www.hmbana.org/>

Community breastmilk sharing guidelines

Statement from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine -

<https://abm.memberclicks.net/assets/DOCUMENTS/ABM's%202017%20Position%20Statement%20on%20Informal%20Breast%20Milk%20Sharing%20for%20the%20Term%20Healthy%20Infant.pdf>

Contact NLCA:

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