

# Infant formula guide

## How to choose which formula to use

Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed an infant, and has benefits for both mum and baby. This information is for families who have decided to bottle feed. A commercial infant formula is the only suitable substitute to breast milk for babies up until 12 months of age.

It can be hard to choose a formula to feed your baby from the wide range that is available.

Choose an infant formula that is

- suitable for the age of your baby
- easy to buy locally
- affordable



All infant formulas available in Australia meet the Food Standards Code, and have all the nutrition that growing babies need. Some formulas have extra ingredients, but there isn't enough evidence to say this makes them better. It is more about marketing.

### When choosing a formula

- Don't choose specialty formulas (like soy formulas) unless a health professional tells you to. If you think your child needs a special formula, talk to your GP, child health nurse or Accredited Practising Dietitian.
- Don't switch formulas. Babies can be unsettled for lots of reasons, and changing formulas might not help – and sometimes it can make things worse. The 'how to make it' instructions can differ and it is easy to make mistakes if you swap formula.

### After baby turns one

If your baby starts on infant formula before they are one year old, once they turn one, you can start to replace infant formula with full cream milk from a small cup. Full cream milk is a lot easier than making up formula or powdered toddler drinks. If you are breastfeeding, keep going for as long as both you and your baby wish. The toddler and junior milk range of drinks are not comparable to breast milk. They are milk powder with added flavours, vitamins and additives. They are not needed for healthy growth and development.

## A guide to choosing a formula or milk drink for your child

✓ suitable

✗ do not use (potentially unsafe)

	Birth to 6 months	6 to 12 months	1 year and above
Breast milk	✓	✓	✓
Infant formula suitable from birth (cow's milk based)	✓	✓	not needed, talk to your health professional for individual advice
Full cream cow's milk or other milks like goat and sheep	✗	✗	✓
Store-bought soy, oat, nut, rice or coconut drinks	✗	✗	✓ talk to your health professional about dairy alternatives
Soy based infant formula suitable from birth Goat's milk based infant formula Rice based infant formula Infant formula marketed for hungrier babies, suitable from birth (cows' milk based) Special formula available on shelf anti-reflux, lactose-free, partially hydrolysed, and comfort formulas	talk to your health professional	talk to your health professional	not needed, talk to your health professional for individual advice
Follow-on formula suitable from 6 months of age (cow's milk based)	✗	not needed, can use from birth formulas for the first 12 months use only from 6 months	not needed
Number 3, growing-up or toddler milks aimed at 1 year of age and above (cow's milk, goat milk or soy based)	✗	✗	not needed, offer full cream milk
Junior drinks or number 4 drinks	✗	✗	not needed, offer milk
Homemade infant formula	✗	✗	✗

### Want to know more

Ask your GP or child health nurse.