

## Westport Low Water Emergency

### Information Sheet 3 - Formula Feeding of Babies aged 0-12 months

Babies are at more risk of becoming dehydrated or getting an infection so they need even more special care and attention during the current water shortage issue. The following advice will help you to feed your baby safely during this emergency.

If you are not breastfeeding your baby, a properly prepared, commercial infant formula is the only safe alternative. Cows' milk should not be given as a drink to babies less than 12 months of age.

You will need infant formula, clean water, as well as feeding and sterilisation equipment to look after your baby during this emergency. Your usual water supply may be disrupted so you will need alternative methods for sterilising equipment and purifying water for preparing formula

- If you have a safe water supply (that is, the Council has not put a boil water notice in place), make formula as you usually do.
- If a boil water notice is in place, you will need to boil or treat your water before using it to make formula
- If you do not have running water, it is difficult to prepare formula. But you can do it.
- Always have an extra unopened tin of formula as part of your emergency supplies. Every time you buy a new tin, swap it with the one in your emergency supplies.
- Don't use formula that is past its use-by date.
- Use newborn formula for babies aged 0–6 months. This formula is also suitable for older babies.

**Tip:** If your emergency water is a strange colour, it may be because sterilising in cold water is not working properly. In this case, it is better to use the hot water method.

#### How to prepare infant formula safely

- Surfaces, hands and utensils must be as clean as possible to prevent your baby getting sick.
- Be absolutely sure that the water you use to make up formula is safe.
- Follow the steps below to prepare safe formula for your baby when you do not have your usual electricity, gas and water supplies.

**Step 1: Clean surfaces and wash hands**

1. Wet the work surface with clean water, squirt it with dishwashing liquid and rub it with a paper towel.
2. Put a clean paper towel down to work on if the surface is not normally used to prepare food or if it is too rough to clean.
3. Follow the 20/20 rule for hand washing: Wash your hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds and dry them with a clean paper towel for 20 seconds. If you can't use warm, soapy water, wipe any visible dirt off your hands with a baby wipe and then wash your hands with an alcohol based hand sanitiser.

**Step 2: Sterilise bottles, teats and equipment, including breast pumps**

1. Wash the bottles with warm, clean, soapy water. Always wash the bottles immediately after using them.
2. Sterilise in hot water or cold water.
  - a. Sterilising with hot water
    - Fill a pot with enough water to cover the items. Put the lid on.
    - Bring the water to the boil on a gas stove, barbecue or wood burner. Boil in a rolling boil for 1 minute.
    - Keep the pot covered until you need the items.
    - Use clean tongs to lift the items out of the pot.
    - Keep the pot covered so that you can re-boil the water and use it again the next day.
  - b. Sterilising with cold water and sterilisation tablets
    - In a clean pot, mix water with the right number of sterilisation tablets (for example, two Milton tablets are needed for 4 litres of water).
    - Plunge the bottles, teats and the measuring jug into the solution. Make sure there are no air bubbles.
    - Put the lid on and soak the items for at least 15 minutes. You can keep the items in the solution until you need them.
    - Make a new solution every 24 hours. You can use the old sterilising water for other things such as washing hands or cleaning surfaces.

### **Step 3: Make your replacement water safe**

If your usual drinking-water supply is not available, make your replacement water safe in one of these ways:

1. The safest water for preparing formula is commercial bottled water that is sealed. If your baby is less than 3 months old, you must still boil this water and let it to cool to room temperature before using it.
  - If you are using stored water or water from tankers or public tanks for preparing formula, you have to boil it for babies of all ages.
  - If you use an electric jug, boil a full jug until it cuts out.
  - If you use a stove top kettle, boil the water until the kettle makes a loud whistle.
  - If you use a pot on the stove, bring the water to a boil.
2. If you cannot boil the water, you can use water purification tablets (such as Aquatabs). Follow the instructions on the packet.

Once you have safe water:

- Fill the sterilised bottle(s) with safe water and cool the water to room temperature.
- Add the formula powder to the bottle just before you need it
- Cover any left-over boiled water, store it away from direct sunlight in a sterile container or bottle and use it within 24 hours. After 24 hours, you will need to re-boil the water to make it safe again.

### **Step 4: Prepare infant formula**

1. Follow the instructions on the formula tin, using safe water and sterilised equipment to feed.
2. If you have any formula left over, use it within 2 hours.
3. Wash the bottle and teat with clean soapy water straight after you have used them.

**Tip:** If you don't have a suitable bottle, you can try feeding your baby formula:

- from a sterilised cup. Let the baby sip, take your time and don't pour the formula down baby's throat. Babies need practice to drink from a cup and some find it difficult
- with a sterilised spoon.

**Make sure the cup or spoon is sterilised.**

### **If your baby is eating solid foods**

- If you are formula feeding but don't have enough formula, and your baby is over 9 months, give your baby more solid food and safe water.

**Tip:** Before feeding your baby solids, wash your baby's hands or wipe them with a baby wipe and then wash with hand sanitiser.

- You can use ready-to-eat baby food straight from the jar or pouch. Once you have opened it, give it to your baby straight away and do not keep it for more than 2 hours at room temperature.
- You can prepare food for baby from ingredients you have for the rest of the family. Make sure the texture and consistency of the food is suitable for the age of your baby.
- Do not give your baby food that has passed the best-before date or perishable food (food that can rot or go bad) that has not been chilled.
- If you have thawed foods, use foods that have stayed cold.
- Throw away high-risk foods that have been at room temperature for more than 2 hours. High-risk foods include meat, seafood, egg dishes, made-up baby cereals and rice. Heat food until it is piping hot to kill germs. Babies are at more risk of getting food poisoning than older children and adults.  
**Remember: 'If in doubt, throw it out.'**

### **If your supplies are low or if you need help**

- Listen to your local radio and follow Council/Civil Defence instructions.
- Ask neighbours for help.
- Phone PlunketLine 0800 933 922.
- Phone Healthline 0800 611 116.
- Contact your midwife or local maternity unit if your baby is less than 6 weeks old.
- Contact your Well Child Nurse or Plunket Nurse if your baby is older than 6 weeks.
- Contact or visit your nearest operating Civil Defence Centre if one has been opened

## Useful Websites

*Get Thru website for preparing an emergency kit:*

<http://getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/emergency-survival-items>

*How to fill water containers:*

<http://getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/how-to-store-water>

*Keeping food safe during emergencies:*

[www.foodsmart.govt.nz/elibrary/keeping\\_food\\_safe.htm](http://www.foodsmart.govt.nz/elibrary/keeping_food_safe.htm)

*Useful website if you are feeding your baby formula:*

Ministry of Health's Feeding Your Baby Infant Formula gives detailed advice on feeding infant formula:

[www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/feeding-your-baby-infant-formula](http://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/feeding-your-baby-infant-formula)

### **Acknowledgement**

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