



SAFE ALTERNATIVE FEEDING

Dried infant formulae are not sterile products; there is evidence of intrinsic contamination with potentially harmful bacteria. Extrinsic contamination is also possible in the handling, storage and preparation of these products. To minimise the risks involved, strict hygienic practices should be adhered to.

Commercial ready-to-feed liquid infant formulae, usually sold in single-use feeding bottles or in tetra-pack cartons, are sterile products. These, however, can be contaminated with potentially harmful environmental bacteria after opening or during the handling and administration of feeds. Strict hygienic procedures should therefore be followed also in using these products, to minimise the risks involved.

For dried infant formulae, the instructions on the tin or carton for reconstituting and preparing feeds must be followed exactly to ensure that the preparation is not too concentrated or too dilute; over-concentration and over-dilution can both be dangerous to the infant.

Undiluted cow's milk (or milk from other mammals), or condensed milk, or skimmed or semi-skimmed milks, or home adaptations of these should not be used for infants under one year of age. After one year of age, if using cow's milk, full fat milk should be used and not skimmed or semi-skimmed milks. These latter products should be avoided at least until the child is over two years of age.

The following practices are recommended for reconstituting, storing and feeding dried infant formula, and for the safe handling of ready-to-feed liquid infant formula at home:

- Avoid contamination (e.g. wash hands, ensure cleanliness of kitchen and equipment).
- Prepare powdered infant formula fresh for each meal.
- Use germ-free containers (i.e. thoroughly washed and sterilized by boiling for 10 minutes, by immersion in chemical sterilising liquids, or by using microwave sterilisers).
- Reconstitute formula in hot water (>70°C) or water that has been boiled and cooled to 70°C, avoiding recontamination.
- Cool the reconstituted formula rapidly (no longer than 30 minutes) and use it immediately; be cautious about the temperature to avoid the risk of burning the infant's mouth.
- Discard any remaining formula after each feed.