

# Cow's Milk and Infants

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## American Academy of Pediatrics - Brief Use of Cow's Milk for Older Infants

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated its website with guidance that cow's milk may be acceptable for some infants over six months of age if infant formula cannot be obtained during the formula shortage. This only applies to infants using standard formulas.

We wanted to make you aware of this posting and provide the link to the AAP website and their article, [Why Do Infants Need Baby Formula Instead of Cow's Milk?](#). You may receive questions from participants as this information spreads through media channels. The talking points in this document can help you address participants' questions or concerns.

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### Why Do Infants Need Baby Formula Instead of Cow's Milk?

Many parents ask why they can't feed their baby regular cow's milk instead of **breastmilk** or formula. There are two main reasons: Infants cannot digest cow's milk as completely or easily as they digest breastmilk or baby formula. And, more importantly, cow's milk does not contain enough of certain nutrients that babies under a year old need.



During the current **baby formula shortage**, it may be OK for some babies over 6 months of age to have cow's milk for a short period of time if no formula is available. If you aren't able to find baby formula in stock anywhere, talk with your pediatrician and read more [here](#).

### Talking points for participants that have questions:

1. Encourage formula as the best alternative to breastmilk for infants less than 1 year old. Review the [Similac Formula Recall Minnesota WIC Approved Substitutions List](#) to explore formula options for the infant.
2. Do not suggest cow's milk for infants, but, if you learn that an infant is receiving cow's milk before one year of age, refer the family to their health care provider to discuss the following:
  - Duration for use of cow's milk and age appropriateness
  - Iron supplementation (or use of an infant multivitamin with iron)
  - Health risks
3. If cow's milk is used, make sure the infant is receiving whole milk. **Stress that it is not ideal and should only be used for a brief time.** Discuss appropriate iron sources and

how to incorporate them into baby's diet. (An iron supplement may still be needed since it can be difficult to get enough iron from the small amounts an infant may be eating.)

4. Although a pediatrician may suggest brief use of cow's milk, goat's milk and plant-based milk **should not be** given to infants. The low amount of folic acid and other nutrients are a concern. For additional discussion on this, the article [With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any?](#) provides more information.
5. If formula scarcity is severe in a specific area, contact your consultant to explore whether there are other options.

Contact your consultant with questions.

## **Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks**

### Why Do Infants Need Baby Formula Instead of Cow's Milk?

(<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Why-Formula-Instead-of-Cows-Milk.aspx>)

### Similac Formula Recall Minnesota WIC Approved Substitutions List

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/recall/substitutions.pdf>)

### With the baby formula shortage, what should I do if I can't find any?

(<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Are-there-shortages-of-infant-formula-due-to-COVID-19.aspx>)

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