



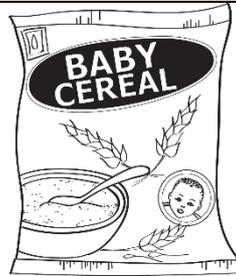
410e: Hunger alleviation

Feeding babies and young children.

I have prepared these notes to assist clubs who supply food to families with young children, or to organisations that feed young children.

Babies ages 0 – 6 months should only be given breastmilk. They should be fed many times a day and at night. Mothers who are HIV positive are given drug treatment to markedly decrease the risk of transmission of HIV through breastmilk. Formula feeding for these babies is only required when medically indicated.

Commercial baby food offers convenience, but it is not essential.



When a baby needs commercial infant formula (such as abandoned babies), the most suitable type should be recommended by a health professional. They should receive no other food or liquid other than this formula until 6 months. As far as possible the baby should be cup fed, as feeding bottles are difficult to clean thoroughly. Information on how to prepare formula follows overleaf.

Solid food should be introduced to the baby when he / she is **6 months old**. A variety of nutrient dense foods should be used. If the baby rejects it at first it can be mixed with breastmilk – so that the taste is familiar. Commercial baby food is not essential.

Well cooked, and mashed chicken livers are an excellent food choice. They are high in minerals, especially iron, a nutrient that many South African children lack.



From **6 – 8 months** the baby should be fed 2 – 3 times a day, starting with 2 spoons at each meal and increasing to 2/3 of cup of food at each meal. Suggested foods are continued breastfeeding, liver, butternut, carrots, mashed potato / sweet potato, soft fruit, peanut butter, avocado, cooked beans, pilchards.

From **9 – 11 months** the texture of the food must be less smooth, and finely chopped foods included. Foods the baby can pick up are also suitable. 3 – 4 meals a day are needed, with breastfeeding continuing in between. Non breastfed babies can be given pasteurised full cream milk; follow on formula is not needed.

All food prepared for babies and young children must be clean and safe.

From **12 – 24 months** breastmilk or full cream milk remain core to the eating plan. 3 – 4 meals and 1 or 2 snacks must be given. The variety of foods from all food groups can be increased, based on the family eating plan (assuming it is healthy), chopped or mashed when needed.

Babies and young children should only receive breastmilk, milk or clean water to drink. Tea inhibits iron absorption, and juice promotes tooth decay.



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PREPARATION OF INFANT FORMULA

One of the most difficult aspects of home based formula preparation is the fact that there are many differing messages used in South Africa. Some are methods that were used a long time ago and have not been updated, others are relevant to older infants and some are used in other countries and are not necessarily best in South Africa.

The steps outlined below are the ones that are recommended for use in South Africa, and should be used by all health workers who help teach caregivers to prepare formula optimally.

It is best to make a fresh portion of formula for each feed, and for the feed to be given to the baby immediately. Extra preparation and serving equipment can be cleaned and sterilised at one time, store them as recommended below until needed for each feed.

Cleaning and sterilising feeding and preparation equipment

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
2. Wash feeding and preparation equipment (e.g. cups, bottles, teats, measuring jug, spoons, and scoop).

Note: cups, bottles and mixing equipment should be washed straight after use; the washing described in this step may be a second wash.

Where feeding bottles are used, clean bottle and teat brushes should be used to scrub inside and outside of bottles and teats to ensure that all remaining feed is removed.

3. Rinse the equipment in clean water.
4. The equipment must then be sterilized, this can be by submerging and boiling, using commercial sterilising solution or a commercial home steriliser.

Preparing a feed using powdered infant formula

It is best to make powdered infant formula for each feed and for it to be given to the infant immediately. This is because mixed formula provides ideal conditions for the growth of bacteria. The steps given below outline the safest way to prepare individual feeds of powdered infant formula for use in cups or feeding bottles.

1. Boil water to use to make the feed. The water must be at a rolling boil for 3 – 5 minutes. This is to destroy bacteria in the water.
2. Microwave ovens should not be used to prepare infant feeds because they heat contents unevenly and may result in hot spots which may burn the infant.
3. It is not necessary to use bottled water; clean tap water can be used. If bottled water is used it must also be boiled because it is not sterile.
4. Pour the correct amount of water for the feed into the cleaned and sterilised feeding cup or bottle. The water must have been left to cool for no more than 10 minutes after it was boiled. This is the right amount of time for it to cool slightly, but to remain hot enough (70°C) to destroy bacteria that may be in the powdered infant formula.



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5. To the measured water add the exact amount of powdered infant formula needed as instructed. Adding more or less powder than recommended can make infants ill. Use the scoop provided, level the powder using the back of a sterilised knife.
6. If using a feeding cup, mix by stirring with a sterilised spoon, taking care to avoid scalds.
7. If using a feeding bottle, assemble the cleaned and sterilised parts of the bottle. Shake / swirl gently to ensure that the contents are mixed. Take care to avoid scalds.
8. Immediately after preparation quickly cool the feed to feeding temperature by holding the sealed container under cool running tap water, or by placing it in a container of cold or iced water.
9. Check the feeding temperature of the feed. Very hot water was used to make it and it cannot be given to infants at this temperature. Feeds do not have to be warm when given to babies.
10. Throw any feed that has not been consumed within two hours away, or give to older children to drink (or the mother can drink it herself).

Semi prepared feeds

1. Individual portions of powdered infant formula can be measured into clean, sterilised dry containers. At the destination, boiled water, no less than 70°C can be used to prepare the feed, using washed and sterilised equipment.
If boiling water will not be available at the time of use, pre-boiled water can be used, but the feed must be given immediately (so that if bacteria from the PIF are present they will not have time to multiply).
2. Feeding equipment should be washed after use.

Source of information: Department of Health, South Africa.