



Safeguarding children

1.16.6 How to make up infant formula milk

The importance of good hygiene

A baby's immune system is not as strong or well developed as an adult's, so babies are much more prone to illness and infection. This means that good hygiene is very important when making up a feed.

Even when tins and packets of powdered infant formula are sealed, they can sometimes contain bacteria such as *Cronobacter sakazakii* and, more rarely, salmonella. Although these bacteria are very rare, the infections they cause can be life-threatening.

Bacteria multiply very fast at room temperature. Even when the feed is kept in a fridge, bacteria can still survive and multiply, although they do this more slowly.

Step-by-step guide to preparing a formula feed

- **Step 1:** Fill the kettle with at least 1 litre of fresh tap water (don't use bottled water or water that has been boiled before).
- **Step 2:** Boil the water.
- **Step 3:** Leave the water to cool in the kettle, but for no more than 30 minutes. This will ensure it stays at a temperature of at least 70C. Water at this temperature will kill any harmful bacteria. (Remember you need to let the feed cool a little more before giving it to the baby.)
- **Step 4:** Clean and disinfect the surface you are going to use.
- **Step 5:** Clean and sterilise all the equipment used to make up the feed. Bottles, teats and any other feeding equipment need to be sterilised before each feed.
- **Step 6:** It's very important that you wear gloves / wash your hands.
- **Step 7:** If you are using a cold-water steriliser, shake off any excess solution from the bottle and the teat, or rinse the bottle with cooled boiled water from the kettle (not tap water).
- **Step 8:** Stand the bottle on a clean surface.
- **Step 9:** Keep the teat and cap on the upturned lid of the steriliser. Avoid putting them on the work surface.



- **Step 10:** Follow the manufacturer's instructions and pour the amount of water you need into the bottle. Double check that the water level is correct. Always put the water in the bottle first, while it is still hot, before adding the powdered infant formula.
- **Step 11:** Loosely fill the scoop with formula, according to the manufacturer's instructions, and level it off using either the flat edge of a clean, dry knife or the leveller provided. Different tins of formula come with different scoops. Make sure you only use the scoop that is enclosed with the powdered infant formula you are using.



- **Step 12:** Holding the edge of the teat, put it on the bottle. Then screw the retaining ring onto the bottle.
- **Step 13:** Cover the teat with the cap and shake the bottle until the powder is dissolved.
- **Step 14:** Cool the formula so it's not too hot to drink. Hold the bottom half of the bottle under cold running water. Make sure the water does not touch the cap covering the teat.
- **Step 15:** Test the temperature of the formula on the inside of your wrist before giving it to the baby. It should be body temperature, which means it should feel warm or cool, but not hot.
- **Step 16:** If there is any made-up formula left after a feed, throw it away.

Dos and don'ts of making up infant formula

- Do follow the manufacturers' instructions on how much powder to use.
- Don't add extra formula powder when making up a feed. This can make the baby constipated and may cause dehydration. Too little powdered infant formula may not provide your baby with enough nourishment.
- Do make up one feed at a time, as the baby needs it.
- Don't add sugar or cereals to the feed in the bottle.
- Don't warm up infant formula in a microwave, as it can heat the feed unevenly and may burn your baby's mouth.
- Don't use bottled water when making up formula milk. Bottled water is not recommended for making up feeds as it's not sterile and may contain too much salt (sodium) or sulphate. If you have to use

bottled water to make up a feed, check the label to make sure the sodium (also written as Na) level is less than 200 milligrams (mg) per litre, and the sulphate (also written as SO or SO₄) content is not higher than 250mg per litre. It's not usually sterile so, like tap water, it will still need to be boiled before you prepare the feed.

Reducing the risk of infection

- Even when tins and packets of powdered infant formula are sealed, they can sometimes contain bacteria.
- Bacteria multiply very fast at room temperature. Even when a feed is kept in a fridge, bacteria can still survive and multiply, although more slowly.
- To reduce the risk of infection, it's best to make up feeds 1 at a time, as your baby needs them.
- Use freshly boiled drinking water from the tap to make up a feed. Do not use artificially softened water or water that has been boiled before.
- Leave the water to cool in the kettle for no more than 30 minutes. Then it will stay at a temperature of at least 70C. Water at this temperature will kill any harmful bacteria.
- Remember to let the feed cool before you give it to your baby. Or you can hold the bottle (with the lid on) under cold water from the tap.

Do not use bottled water to make up formula feeds

- Bottled water is not recommended for making up feeds, as it's not sterile and may contain too much salt (sodium) or sulphate.

This article is taken from NHS Choices and is recommended by OFSTED as best practice when making up formula milk for babies.

More information

Read more about bottle feeding, and find the answers to common questions about infant formula, at www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby

This policy was updated and reviewed on:

Reviewed date	Name	Signature
September 2025	Stuart Watt	