

Feeding Infants in a Disaster

Infant Feeding: Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the safest way to feed babies in emergency situations.

- If your WIC agency is closed, you may contact another one for breastfeeding support. Visit [ncdhhs.gov/localWIC](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/localWIC) for locations and contact information.

Frozen breast milk may not be safe. In a power outage, remember:

- Keeping the freezer door closed will help prevent the milk from thawing completely.
- Milk is still considered frozen if ice crystals can be seen in it.
- Once milk has thawed, use it within 24 hours. Thawed milk cannot be refrozen.

You can carry freshly expressed milk in a cooler or an insulated cooler bag with frozen ice packs for up to 24 hours. Once arriving at your destination, you must use the milk right away, store it in the refrigerator, or freeze it. If it is not used right away, let emergency responders know that you have expressed breast milk that needs to be refrigerated and stored safely.

To express breast milk during or after an emergency, hand expression or a manual breast pump will allow you to continue without electricity.

Infant Feeding: Formula Feeding

PREPARATION AND STORAGE:

- Ready-to-feed (RTF) formula
 - RTF infant formula is a sterile liquid that is ready to feed without adding water.
 - When using ready-to-feed formula, pour needed amount of formula for one feeding into a clean bottle. After the feeding, throw away any formula left in the baby bottle.

- Unused RTF infant formula left in the original container must be refrigerated and used within 24 hours or as specified on the formula label.
- Do not add water to “stretch” the formula.
- Powdered infant formula
 - For standard formulas, similar other brands like the generic or store brand are generally fine.
 - If a baby uses a specialty formula and it is not available, try to work with the health care provider.
 - Use a clean bottle or other food-grade safe container and lid to prepare the infant formula.
 - If tap water is not safe to drink, use bottled water if available. You may also use boiled water.
 - Important note: Powdered infant formula is not sterile. If your baby is less than 2 months old, born prematurely or has a weakened immune system, use ready-to-feed infant formula instead.

REMEMBER:

- Always follow formula label instructions using the scoop provided in each can or those given to you by your health care provider.
- Always use a safe form of drinking water for infant feeding
- Once formula is mixed, it must be refrigerated and used within 24 hours or as written on the formula label. If refrigeration is not available, mix formula each time baby is ready to eat and then throw away any formula left in the bottle after the feeding.
- Use infant formula before the “best by” or “use by” date.
- Infant formula is the recommended formula for those younger than a year, not toddler formula.
- Do NOT give animal milk or plant-based milks to babies instead of infant formula.
- Do NOT make homemade infant formula; it may not have the right amount of nutrients like iron.
- Do NOT water down formula to stretch it out; it can be extremely dangerous to babies.

Cleaning Infant Feeding Items During Emergencies

- Cleaning supplies:
 - In most emergencies, bottled water is safest for cleaning and consuming.
 - Follow advice and instructions from local public health officials about water safety.
 - Clean all tools and containers used for preparing and/or storing baby food, infant formula, or breast milk after every use.
- When infant feeding supplies cannot be cleaned:
 - If possible, have baby feed directly at the breast.
 - Use disposable cups and supplies for feeding infants.

Infant Feeding Resources

- CDC's Breastfeeding Resources - [cdc.gov/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/about](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/about)
- Infant Formula Preparation and Storage - [cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/formula-feeding](https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/formula-feeding)
- FDA Infant Formula: Safety Do's and Don'ts - [fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/infant-formula-safety-dos-and-donts](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/infant-formula-safety-dos-and-donts)
- NCDHHS Breastfeeding Promotion and Support - [nutritionnc.com/breastfeeding](https://www.nutritionnc.com/breastfeeding)
- USDA WIC Breastfeeding - [wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov](https://www.wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov)

WIC Resources

- WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children that provides participants with benefits for healthy foods, breastfeeding education and support, and health care referrals. Learn more at [ncdhhs.gov/ncwic](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic).
- Hurricane Helene impacts: Families participating in WIC who may have relocated to a new area can go to any NC WIC agency to have a new eWIC card issued, or to request replacement of breastfeeding supplies, breast pumps, and food purchased with current WIC benefits and lost due to Hurricane Helene. Call eWIC Customer Service at 1-844-230-0813 or visit [ncdhhs.gov/helene](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/helene).

