

# Feeding Your Baby in an Emergency: For babies aged 0–12 months

## Introduction

**Emergencies can happen at any time with little or no warning. Babies are at more risk of becoming dehydrated or getting an infection so they need special care and attention in an emergency.**

To keep your baby safe and healthy:

- have a plan for what you will do in emergencies
- have emergency supplies ready.

Breastfeeding is the best way of feeding your baby in an emergency. Breast milk is safe and helps your baby fight off infections.

If you are using formula, you will need infant formula and clean water as well as feeding and sterilisation equipment to look after your baby in an emergency. You need to be able to deal with a:

- **cut in the water supply.** If you are using formula, a top priority is to have safe, drinkable water plus enough water for sterilising and cleaning equipment.
- **power cut.** You need a plan for how you will sterilise equipment and purify water if you are preparing formula without your usual power supply.

Discuss with your family how you can be prepared for an emergency so that everyone in the household stays safe and healthy.

There are 2 parts to this brochure.

- **Part 1** tells you how to **get ready** to care for your baby in an emergency.
- **Part 2** tells you how to **get thru** an emergency while caring for a baby aged 0–12 months.

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# Part 1: Get ready – Preparing for an emergency

## Emergency supplies

This list of emergency supplies will be enough for 3–5 days. It will help you look after your baby when you do not have your usual water and electricity supplies.

**For all babies** – you will need:

- 30 disposable nappies
- one box of baby wipes
- one bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- rubbish bags for dirty nappies
- any medicines or creams your baby needs.

You may also choose to have:

- one box of disposable gloves
- spare clothes, a blanket or special toy.

## For breastfeeding mums

You will need bottled water and nutritious snacks for mum (muesli bars, dried fruit and nuts, breakfast biscuits, crackers with peanut butter, tinned fish, baked beans).

**For formula fed babies** – you will need:

- one tin of unopened infant formula (900 g), **or**
- if your baby needs special infant formula (eg, because of an allergy), enough infant formula for two weeks. Always get your prescription in time before your supplies run low

**Note:** Swap the tin every time you buy a new one so that your emergency tin never gets too close to its use-by date

- 5 litres of commercially bottled water (non-carbonated) for preparing formula (if your baby is under 3 months, you will need to boil this water before using it to make up formula)
- a container with a lid to store boiled water
- two or more clean feeding bottles and teats or a cup if your baby can drink from it (easier to clean). Bottles labelled **EN14350** are good quality and marked with accurate measurements, which is important for making up formula
- one box of water purification tablets (such as Aquatabs).

To sterilise bottles and teats in an emergency, you need:

- one pot with a lid (large enough to fit two or more bottles) for sterilising in either hot or cold water
- one box of sterilising tablets (such as Milton 30 tablet box) for sterilising in cold water

- kitchen tongs.

To wash your hands and work surfaces, and to clean and sterilise bottles and teats, you will need:

- 15–20 litres of stored water. If your freezer is big enough, store some water in there.  
**Note:** This 15–20 litres is just to feed formula to your baby. You will also need at least 3 litres of water each day for each other person in the family.
- two rolls of paper towels
- one small bottle of dishwashing liquid
- soap for hand washing
- one bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitiser.  
**Note:** You need to have (or have access to) a gas stove, barbecue or wood burner to boil water for preparing formula. Make sure you have enough fuel for it in your emergency supplies as well.

## For babies aged 6–12 months

To feed your baby, you will need:

- suitable emergency food supplies such as tinned fruit and vegetables, tinned fish and beans, plain cereals and crackers – get enough of this food for other members of the family too
- a can opener.

Having some jars or pouches of baby food is also helpful.

## Getaway kit for leaving in a hurry

You need a packed kit ready for when you need to leave in a hurry. Your kit should have:

- nappies, baby wipes and hand sanitiser
- if you are feeding formula to your baby, 1 tin of infant formula, bottled water, clean bottle and teat and sterilising (Milton) tablets
- a few jars or pouches of baby food if your baby is eating solids
- spare clothing, a blanket and medicines that your baby needs.

**Tip:** If your baby often stays with family or carers, think about having some emergency supplies at their place as well as at home.

## More information

For a full list of emergency items you need for all of your family, go to: <http://getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/emergency-survival-items>

For information on how to fill and store water containers safely, go to: <http://getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/how-to-store-water>

## Part 2: Get thru – Feeding your baby in an emergency

### If you are breastfeeding

- **Keep breastfeeding.** Do not start formula feeding and do not wean your baby from the breast in an emergency.
- If you are both breastfeeding and formula feeding, it is best to increase breastfeeding. If possible, only breastfeed your baby and stop formula feeding during the emergency.
- You need plenty of fluids and snacks. Remember: 'Looking after the mum is looking after the baby.'
- Breastfeeding can help calm you and your baby. A mum can make enough milk even when stressed. But stress can affect the flow of milk and make babies fuss at the breast. It helps if you feed your baby often. Keep your baby close and have skin-to-skin contact where possible.
- If you are in a Civil Defence Centre, ask for a quiet, comfortable place to breastfeed.

### If you are using expressed breast milk

You can keep expressed breast milk (fresh or thawed) at room temperature for up to 4 hours. If you are not sure when it thawed, do not use it.

Keep any frozen breast milk deep in the freezer and only open the freezer when you need to.

If you are using a breast pump, you must be able to sterilise it. See the next page to find out how to sterilise feeding equipment including breast pumps in an emergency.

If you cannot sterilise the breast pump, you can express breast milk by hand.

### If you are feeding formula to your baby

- If you have a safe water supply and electricity or gas, make formula as you usually do.
- If you do not have running water or electricity or gas, it is difficult to prepare formula. But you can do it.
- Always have an extra unopened tin of formula as part of your emergency supplies. Every time you buy a new tin, swap it with the one in your emergency supplies. Don't use formula that is past its use-by date.
- Use newborn formula for babies aged 0–6 months. This formula is also suitable for older babies.

**Tip:** If your emergency water is a strange colour, it may be because sterilising in cold water is not working properly. In this case, it is better to use the hot water method.

### If you recently stopped breastfeeding

If you stopped breastfeeding in the last few weeks, you may be able to start making milk again, especially if your baby is under 4 months.

- Hold baby skin to skin, offering the breast as comfort.
- Have short breaks (1–2 hours) between trying to breastfeed your baby.
- Keep using formula until baby is getting enough breast milk.
- Get help from breastfeeding experts such as a lactation consultant, La Leche League or breastfeeding peer supporters.

### If you are looking after a baby separated from breastfeeding mum

- Using another mother's breast milk may be an option for some women, family and whānau. You need to be sure this milk is safe as a very small number of serious infectious diseases can be passed on through breast milk.
- You can feed the baby with safe formula. Use clean equipment and follow the instructions on the next page.

### How to prepare infant formula safely

Surfaces, hands and utensils must be as clean as possible to prevent your baby getting sick. Be absolutely sure that the water you use to make up formula is safe. Follow the steps below to prepare safe formula for your baby when you do not have your usual electricity, gas and water supplies.

#### Step 1: Clean surfaces and wash hands

1. Wet the work surface with clean water, squirt it with dishwashing liquid and rub it with a paper towel.
2. Put a clean paper towel down to work on if the surface is not normally used to prepare food or if it is too rough to clean.
3. Follow the 20/20 rule for hand washing: Wash your hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds and dry them with a clean paper towel for 20 seconds. If you can't use warm, soapy water, wipe any visible dirt off your hands with a baby wipe and then wash your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

## Step 2: Sterilise bottles, teats and equipment, including breast pumps

1. Wash the bottles with warm, clean, soapy water. Always wash the bottles immediately after using them.
2. Sterilise in hot water or cold water.
  - a. Sterilising with hot water
    - Fill a pot with enough water to cover the items. Put the lid on.
    - Bring the water to the boil on a gas stove, barbecue or wood burner. Boil in a rolling boil for 1 minute.
    - Keep the pot covered until you need the items.
    - Use clean tongs to lift the items out of the pot.
    - Keep the pot covered so that you can re-boil the water and use it again the next day.
  - b. Sterilising with cold water and sterilisation tablets
    - In a clean pot, mix water with the right number of sterilisation tablets (for example, two Milton tablets are needed for 4 litres of water).
    - Plunge the bottles, teats and the measuring jug into the solution. Make sure there are no air bubbles.
    - Put the lid on and soak the items for at least 15 minutes. You can keep the items in the solution until you need them.
    - Make a new solution every 24 hours. You can use the old sterilising water for other things such as washing hands or cleaning surfaces.

## Step 3: Make your replacement water safe

If your usual drinking-water supply is not available, make your replacement water safe in one of these ways.

1. The safest water for preparing formula is commercial bottled water that is sealed. If your baby is less than 3 months old, you must still boil this water and let it to cool to room temperature before using it.
  - If you are using stored or delivered water for preparing formula, you have to boil it for

babies of all ages.

- If you use an electric jug, boil a full jug until it cuts out.
  - If you use a stove top kettle, boil the water until the kettle makes a loud whistle.
  - If you use a pot on the stove or barbecue, bring the water to a rolling boil for 1 minute.
2. If you cannot boil the water, you can use water purification tablets (such as Aquatabs). Follow the instructions on the packet.

Once you have safe water:

- fill the sterilised bottle(s) with safe water and cool the water to room temperature
- add the formula powder to the bottle just before you need it
- cover any left over boiled water, store it away from direct sunlight in a sterile container or bottle and use it within 24 hours. After 24 hours, you will need to re-boil the water to make it safe again.

## Step 4: Prepare infant formula

1. Follow the instructions on the formula tin, using safe water and sterilised equipment to feed.
2. If you have any formula left over, use it within 2 hours.

**Tip:** If you don't have a suitable bottle, you can try feeding your baby formula:

- from a sterilised cup. Let the baby sip, take your time and don't pour the formula down baby's throat. Babies need practice to drink from a cup and some find it difficult
- with a sterilised spoon.

**Make sure the cup or spoon is sterilised.**

3. Wash the bottle and teat with clean soapy water straight after you have used them.

## If your baby is eating solid foods

- If you are breastfeeding, breastfeed more often so your baby needs less solid food, or only give your baby breast milk.
- If you are formula feeding but don't have enough formula, and your baby is over 9 months, give your baby more solid food and safe water.

**Tip:** Before feeding your baby solids, wash your baby's hands or wipe them with a baby wipe and then wash with hand sanitiser.

- You can use ready-to-eat baby food straight from the jar or pouch. Once you have opened it, give it to your baby straight away and do not keep it for more than 2 hours at room temperature.
- You can prepare food for baby from ingredients you have for the rest of the family. Make sure the texture and consistency of the food is suitable for the age of your baby.
- Do not give your baby food that has passed the best-before date or perishable food (food that can rot or go bad) that has not been chilled.
- If you have thawed foods, use foods that have stayed cold.
- Throw away high-risk foods that have been at room temperature for more than 2 hours. High-risk foods include meat, seafood, egg dishes, made-up baby cereals and rice. Heat food until it is piping hot to kill germs. Babies are at more risk of getting food poisoning than older children and adults. Remember: 'If in doubt, throw it out.'

### **If your supplies are low or if you need help**

Listen to your local radio and follow Civil Defence instructions.

Ask neighbours for help. Some shops may be open. Take cash as Eftpos may be down.

Phone PlunketLine 0800 933 922.

Phone Healthline 0800 611 116.

Contact your midwife or local maternity unit if your baby is less than 6 weeks old.

Contact your Well Child Nurse or Plunket Nurse if your baby is older than 6 weeks.

Talk with Civil Defence staff operating in your area or contact or visit your nearest operating Civil Defence Centre.

### **Useful websites for everyone**

Get Thru website for preparing an emergency kit:

<http://getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/emergency-survival-items>

How to fill water containers: <http://getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/how-to-store-water>

Keeping food safe during emergencies: [www.foodsmart.govt.nz/elibrary/keeping\\_food\\_safe.htm](http://www.foodsmart.govt.nz/elibrary/keeping_food_safe.htm)

### **Useful website if you are breastfeeding your baby**

[www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/babies-and-toddlers/breastfeeding](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/babies-and-toddlers/breastfeeding)

### **Useful website if you are feeding your baby formula**

Ministry of Health's Feeding Your Baby Infant Formula gives detailed advice on feeding infant formula:

[www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/feeding-your-baby-infant-formula](http://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/feeding-your-baby-infant-formula)

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## Checklist: Feeding your baby in an emergency

- Be prepared with supplies for your baby for 3–5 days.
- Keep breastfeeding or breastfeed more in an emergency. Breastfeeding is the best and safest way to feed a baby in an emergency.
- To prepare infant formula safely, follow these steps.

### **Step 1: Clean your work surface and wash your hands.**

- 20/20 rule: Wash with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds and dry with clean paper towel for 20 seconds Or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

### **Step 2: Sterilise bottles, teats and equipment.**

- Hot water: Boil equipment in water for 1 minute.  
or
- Cold water: Use sterilising tablets and soak for at least 15 minutes.

### **Step 3: Make water safe for preparing formula.**

- Use commercial bottled water that is sealed. Boil it if your baby is under 3 months.  
or
- Boil stored water for 1 minute (for babies of all ages).  
or
- Use water purification tablets (such as Aquatabs) (for babies of all ages).

### **Step 4: Prepare formula following the instructions on the tin.**

- If your baby is eating solids offer safe foods and 'if in doubt, throw it out'.
- Ask for help and support to keep your baby safe and healthy.
  - Listen to your local radio and follow Civil Defence instructions.
  - Ask neighbours for help.
  - Talk with Civil Defence staff in your area or contact or visit your nearest operating Civil Defence Centre.
  - Phone PlunketLine 0800 933 922.
  - Phone Healthline 0800 611 116.
  - Visit Civil Defence website: <http://getthru.govt.nz>