

FURTHER INFORMATION ON FORMULA PRODUCTS : Types and components

Types of infant formula

The following table gives a summary of the different types of formula products available for infants.

Type	Age suitability	Detail
Infant formula – whey based	From birth	Cows' milk based formula, adapted to suit needs of infant. Casein to whey ratio is similar to breastmilk (40:60). May have lower mineral content (in particular sodium and potassium) for newborn babies who have immature kidneys.
Infant formula – casein based	From birth	Cows' milk based formula, adapted to suit needs of infant. Casein to whey ratio same as cows' milk (80:20). Studies have shown that casein dominant formulas have been shown to empty from the stomach more slowly. Therefore casein dominant formulas may help delay weaning until the recommended time of 6 months.
Infant formula – soy	From birth	For use under medical advice for babies unable to tolerate other milks. Based on soy protein and modified to suit nutritional requirements of infants. Soya formulas are appropriate for vegetarian and vegans and are also prescribable for galactosaemia and galactokinase deficiency.
Follow-on formula	From 6 months	Cows' milk formula adapted to provide a suitable drink to support the weaning diet from 6 months. Has higher vitamin D and iron when compared to infant formula.
Specialised formulae (Foods for Special Medical Purposes (FSMPs)) <i>See our Medical Section.</i>	From birth	A variety of products are available for babies with medical conditions. These products are typically prescribable in specific cases and require medical supervision.

Components of infant and follow on formula

The following table shows the sources of the various nutritive components found in infant and follow on formula.

Nutrient	Comment
Fat	Fat in formula is based on a blend of dairy or vegetable fats selected for their appropriate levels of unsaturated fatty acids and other absorption characteristics. There are also strict limits laid down in legislation for the content of trans fatty acids.
Carbohydrate	Mature breastmilk contains about 7% carbohydrate, which is present as lactose. In formula products the carbohydrate level of cows' milk is adjusted to match that of breast milk. The milk sugar, lactose and sometimes other approved carbohydrate sources are used for this purpose.
Protein	The protein source for formula products is either cows' milk or soya. Whatever the source, the amino acid content is adjusted to approximate that of breastmilk and to meet the needs of the rapidly growing infant.
Vitamins and minerals	Vitamins, minerals and trace elements are added to formula products during manufacture to meet the infant's nutritional needs and to comply with legal requirements.
Other	Infant formula may also contain other components that are found naturally in breastmilk, such as long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (to help support brain and membrane development), oligosaccharides (to aid digestion) and increase numbers of beneficial gut bacteria or nucleotides (for healthy growth and development).