

Formula Shortage Overview/Impact

There is a current nationwide shortage and widely reported access issues to standard infant formula (for use with healthy infants), as well as specialty formulas (for use with infants and children with health conditions).

Background

- Infant formula manufacturers have observed an increase in consumer formula purchases in recent months. Compounded by pandemic-related national supply chain issues and a February 2022 Abbott recall affecting certain formulas produced at its Sturgis plant in Michigan, this has resulted in national infant formula shortages/outages across manufacturers, of both standard and specialty formulas.
- Infant nutrition is especially critical because for non-breastfed infants, formula comprises all or most of their nutrient needs.
- Consumers are advised against making their own formulas, diluting formulas to 'stretch' them further, or using cow's milk, due to health and safety concerns.
- Access to formula is a concern across the entire market, not limited to WIC clients.
- Additional Michigan Context: Michigan WIC transitioned from a 5-year contract with Mead Johnson (Enfamil formulas) to a contract with Abbott (Similac formulas) beginning November 1, 2021. Federal regulations require WIC to enforce a single-supplier contract to help contain Program costs.

Actions Taken

- In response to the recall, the State WIC agency has implemented a USDA waiver and expanded its list of authorized formulas to allow clients access to alternative formulas at the store.
- State and local WIC agencies continue to promote breastfeeding and provide education and support for families wishing to initiate or re-establish breastfeeding.
- Local WIC agencies can help guide clients to stores where formulas have been recently purchased.
- State WIC agency has communicated to health care providers statewide, to notify them of expanded formulary and other tips.
- State WIC agency updates its website frequently, to convey the most current information to WIC clients and health care providers.
- The State WIC agency has been collecting data on store inventories and procurement issues and is working with manufacturers as needed to address supply problems.
- Many stores are enforcing purchase quantity limits to minimize stockpiling and help ensure access for all consumers.