

# LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

## Infant Formula



When children are not breastfed or are partially breastfed, commercial infant formulas based on cow's milk are the best alternative to breast milk until 12 months of age<sup>1</sup>. A range of infant formulas are available, including **'starter'**, **'follow-on'** & **'toddler'**. With the vast array of different formulas on the market, companies often promote their product as better than their competitors - so it is easy to understand why parents are often confused about what is the most appropriate infant formula to feed their child.

### Starter, newborn or Step 1 formulas

From birth, infants being fed infant formula should have either 'starter', 'newborn', or 'Step 1' formulas. There are many different types of formula on the market, although they are all fundamentally the same. In Australia, all infant formula brands are required to follow stringent guidelines on their composition. These formulas can be continued until an infant is 12 months of age.

### Follow-on, progress or Step 2 formulas

These formulas are based on cow's milk (like 'starter' formulas) and are marketed for 'hungry babies'. They are less like breastmilk, however contain more iron and protein and have a different mix of vitamins and minerals. Follow on formulas are only suitable for children over six months of age.

Breastfeeding is the healthiest start for infants and exclusive breastfeeding should be encouraged, supported and promoted until around six months of age, with continued breastfeeding until 12 months of age while appropriate solid foods are being introduced.



### If parents are considering changing brands or infant formula

It is important to:

- Carefully read the preparation instructions
- Check how many scoops of powder and how much water to use
- Use **only** the scoop that comes with the product being used, as size and quantity can vary.

When changing brands or formulas, babies may be unsettled for a few days or their dirty nappies might look or smell a bit different. If this continues beyond a few days, it is best to see a doctor.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013

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### If considering changing to follow-on formula:

- Children can remain on the 'starter' formulas until 12 months of age. It is a personal choice whether to change to a 'follow-on' formula.
- There is no nutritional evidence showing an advantage in changing from 'starter' formula to a 'follow-on' formula
- If changing between formulas, care must be taken in the preparation as different formulas may be prepared differently.
- 'Follow-on' formulas can be based on cow's milk, soy and goat's milk. For information regarding soy and goat's milk formulas, see **LEAPS** fact sheet 'Alternative infant formula'.

### Toddler or Step 3 formulas

Infant formula companies produce '**toddler**' or '**Step 3**' formulas, which are promoted as providing essential nutrients to help with the growth and development of toddlers over the age of 12 months 'when energy and nutrient intakes may not be adequate'. They promote added vitamins and minerals and other ingredients in the formula.

As from the age of 12 months it is appropriate to give Full Cream Cow's milk, preferably via a cup, not a feeding bottle, combined with a range of nutritious foods. Toddler formulas are also expensive to buy.

For more information on Toddler or Step 3 formulas – see **LEAPS** fact sheet 'Toddler Formula'.

### Other points to remember for children over six months of age:

- Solid foods need to be introduced from around six months of age, to meet a child's increasing nutritional and developmental needs. It is important to introduce iron-containing foods first. By 12 months of age, toddlers need to be consuming a variety of nutritious family foods.
- Cow's milk, as a main drink, should not be given to children under 12 months of age.



For further advice, speak with a child health nurse, paediatrician or dietitian.