

# LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

## Alternative Infant Formula



If an infant is not breastfed or are partially breastfed, commercial infant formulas based on cow's milk should be used as an alternative to breast milk until 12 months of age<sup>1</sup>. With so many different formulas on the market promoting their product as better than their competitors, it is easy to understand why families/carers are often confused about what is the most appropriate infant formula to feed their baby.

### If alternative infant formulas are necessary:

Some families/carers may be worried that cow's milk-based infant formula may not be the right choice for their baby due to medical, cultural or religious reasons. It is recommended that families/carers speak to a doctor to work out which alternative formula is most suitable. Alternative formula's may cost more than regular cow's milk-based formulas.

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.

Cow's milk as a drink should not be given to babies under 12 months of age but can be used in small amounts in food preparation.

If families/carers think their baby may have an allergy to cow's milk formula, it is recommended they speak to a doctor. Soy or goat's milk formulas inappropriate alternatives for babies with a cow's milk allergy.



Alternative infant formula and current recommendations on their use is provided over the page.

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

# LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep



## Alternative Infant Formula

### Soy infant formula

- Is made from soybeans and does not contain any animal products.
- Does not contain lactose (a natural sugar in cow's milk and breast milk).
- If a baby has a problem with lactose intolerance, consider formulas, other than soy based that may be more appropriate.
- Does not prevent or reduce the risk of developing allergies and is not a suitable alternative to cow's milk-based infant formula unless medically advised.

### Goat's milk infant formula

- Contains lactose.
- Is not considered to have any role in preventing or treating allergies.
- Many infants who are allergic to cow's milk are also allergic to goat's milk.
- Is not recommended without medical supervision or advice.

### Formulas for managing other infant conditions

- A number of infant formulas are marketed in Australia, claiming they are suited for managing minor conditions and symptoms. There is lack of evidence of their effectiveness.
- Certain medical conditions may require special formulas but these are only recommended under medical supervision.

### Infant formula with probiotics or prebiotics

There is currently insufficient evidence to recommend the use of these infant formulas as there is insufficient evidence showing any extra benefit to the baby when compared to normal formula.

### Verdict:

If choosing an infant formula for babies from birth, infant formula marked as '**starter**', '**newborn**', or '**Step 1**' formulas are good choices. See either the **LEAPS** or **NAQ Nutrition Food Foundations** fact sheet '*infant formula*' for more information on starter and follow-on formulas. Soy or goat's milk-based formulas are not suitable alternatives for infants with allergies to cow's milk-based formulas unless used under medical supervision. Therefore it is recommended families/carers speak with a doctor if they think their baby may have an allergy to cow's milk formula, and to request their advice on the best choice for the baby before changing to an alternative infant formula.

### Tips:

- If using different infant formula brands, it is important to carefully read the preparation instructions as these may differ from brand to brand.

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