

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

NEWS RELEASE

Media to contact:
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For Immediate Release

DIY Recipes for Formula Are Not a Safe Option for Baby Formula Shortage

(New Jersey) – As the formula shortage worsens, parents and caregivers find themselves in emergency situations where they cannot find baby formula. Shortages have caused parents and caregivers to search for other options to feed their babies. Unknowingly, some of the options may put their baby's health at serious risk.

The NJ Poison Control Center warns families of the misinformation circulating online and on social media claiming it is safe to dilute (watered-down) formula or use homemade/Do-It-Yourself (DIY) recipes as alternatives. Neither of these options are safe alternatives, and both can result in serious harm to infants.

"Even the best intentions can have devastating results," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). "Although it may seem safe to use substitutes or make homemade formula to feed your baby, it can be very dangerous and potentially life-threatening."

Shortages of baby formula may lead to the use of unsafe substitutes such as rice drinks, goat's milk, homemade formula, almond milk, cow's milk, diluted (watered-down) formula, [honey](#), and protein shakes. The use of any substitute to formula or breast milk can quickly lead to severe nutritional deficiency.

Commercial/manufactured infant formula and human breast milk contain essential micronutrients and vitamins babies need to have at each feeding. These additional nutrients are essential to their healthy growth and development. It is important for parents and caregivers to make sure they do not feed their baby any products that do not contain the necessary daily nutrients.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has issued [new guidance](#) to help parents and caregivers struggling to find baby formula as the shortage worsens. However, this new advice is ONLY for emergency situations where baby formula cannot be found. These alternatives are only meant to be used for a short period of time; they cannot be used as permanent alternatives to baby formula.

"If you are not able to get your baby's formula, it's important to speak with your child's pediatrician before making any changes," says Calello. "Your pediatrician is a trusted source and can provide guidance as to the safest, available options for your baby, especially if your baby has special health needs."

Serious side effects have been reported after infants were given formula that does not meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) nutritional standards. A recent [article](#) in CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report discussed three separate incidences of infants treated in emergency departments for low calcium levels and vitamin D-deficient rickets after being fed homemade formula. In addition, infants fed watered-down formula may develop electrolyte imbalance and brain swelling.

If a child is sick after drinking formula or any other product, contact your local poison control center immediately for medical treatment advice. Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and healthcare providers. Get free, medical help, 24/7.

Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#)

If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1



Available for Media Interviews

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About New Jersey Poison Control Center / NJPIES, 1-800-222-1222

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state's primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It is designated as the state's regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES' services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#).

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About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: njms.rutgers.edu.

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