



Where Ohioans Can Turn for Help Finding Infant and Other Specialty Formulas

A national infant formula shortage has left many Ohio families struggling to access the products they depend on to feed their children. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has been working closely with manufacturers and partners to find solutions for Ohio families until formula is more readily available, and continues to share information and resources with Ohioans who need help finding formula. This includes exploring every avenue to meet the needs of children and families participating in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Here are frequently asked questions about how Ohio is helping connect families with the nutritional resources they need for their children and where Ohio families can turn for help to ensure their children's nutritional needs are being met.

What should families do if they can't find their baby's formula?

In most cases, if your baby's regular brand of formula is not currently available, it's best to check with your healthcare provider before choosing a similar version. If you're still having difficulty finding formula, please contact your child's healthcare provider or your WIC clinic if your family is receiving WIC benefits.

What should families receiving WIC benefits do to access other infant formulas?

WIC state agencies have contracts with one of three manufacturers to provide formula to infants receiving WIC benefits and who are partially or fully formula-fed. Ohio WIC's contracted infant formula rebate partner is Mead-Johnson. ODH has worked with the company to provide alternate products and sizes within the contracted brand.

ODH has applied for all available waivers through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and has worked with vendors and the contracted brand to ensure that Ohio families have access to formula. These waivers allow WIC agencies to offer participants additional infant formula options such as alternate sizes, forms, and brands.

More information: [WIC Infant Formula Alternatives](#)

In addition to the efforts put forth by the Ohio WIC program, the Ohio [Children with Medical Handicaps \(CMH\) program](#) provides eligible children with coverage to receive disease-specific formula and supplement options. **If you need help getting formula or a specialty formula for special medical needs, please contact your healthcare provider, local WIC clinic or your local the CMH Public Health Nurse at your Local Health Department.**

What waivers are currently in place for Ohioans receiving WIC benefits?

Ohio WIC has applied for all waivers that have been made available from the USDA. The following waivers are currently in place:

- **Vendor Exchange Waiver.** Allows participants to exchange recalled formula at WIC-authorized vendors. This waiver expires September 30, 2022.
- **Maximum Monthly Allowance (MMA) Waiver.** Gave Ohio WIC the ability to offer other brands and can sizes of formulas.

- **Medical Documentation Waiver.** Waives medical documentation requirements set forth in the WIC Federal Regulations.
- **Formula Fly Waivers.** Allows for out-of-country formulas to be sold in the U.S. and to be redeemable by families receiving WIC benefits. All USDA eligible formulas have been added to the Ohio WIC alternatives list.

The USDA waivers, which were previously set to expire on September 30, 2022, have been extended, ensuring families have continued access to the formula they need. This allows WIC state agencies, with the necessary agreements from their infant formula contract manufacturers, to offer participants additional infant formula options, such as alternate sizes, forms and brands. Ohio's contract manufacturer is Mead Johnson. Alternative options for milk and soy-based Mead Johnson products and imported formulas will be available for purchase through December 31, 2022. Other brands' milk and soy-based formulas (Similac, Gerber, store brands) and alternative sizes for specialty formulas will be available for purchase through November 30, 2022.

What formula substitutions are available?

There are many formula alternatives that WIC families can choose from including brands from Mead-Johnson, Abbott, Gerber, and individual stores. You can find a complete list of formula alternatives [on the ODH website](#). If your child is on a prescription/specialty formula, you will need to speak with your provider about comparable products.

How can families get help accessing specialty formulas?

The Ohio WIC program has been working with local WIC offices to provide formula to eligible families, including hypoallergenic and other specialty formulas. In addition to the WIC program, the [Children with Medical Handicaps \(CMH\) program](#) has been working to help eligible Ohioans support nutritional needs through coverage of disease-specific nutritional formulas and supplements. For eligible individuals on the CMH Treatment Program, "Special Formula" coverage may be added to their benefit package, which includes access to coverage for hundreds of available formulas and supplements that may not be otherwise covered through other insurance. To be eligible for the CMH Treatment Program, an individual must meet financial criteria and have one of the eligible medical diagnoses.

The metabolic formula program under CMH provides metabolic formula and essential amino acids to individuals born with inborn errors of metabolism that are screened for on the Ohio Newborn Bloodspot Screening Panel. Examples of these disorders include phenylketonuria (PKU), maple syrup urine disease (MSUD), tyrosinemia, and propionic acidemia. Without these special formulas, infants and young children may develop poor health outcomes. Coverage of metabolic formula can continue for any Ohio resident with a qualifying diagnosis who is followed at an [Ohio-based Comprehensive Genetic Center](#).

Is a medical prescription for formula needed for children who have a special nutritional need based on their medical diagnosis?

A medical prescription is needed because medical documentation is **federally** required to issue specialized formulas. To increase access to formula for Ohio families, ODH has requested that healthcare providers issue medical prescriptions to participants enrolled in the WIC program for equivalent formulas that may be more readily available on store shelves. Additionally, ODH sent local WIC clinics an updated medical prescription form that enables the healthcare provider to mark a checkbox for a hypoallergenic store brand equivalent and select a first, second, and third choice option for formulas.

Resources:

[Frequently Asked Questions About Infant Formula Shortage](#)

[Information for Families During the Formula Shortage](#)

[WIC Infant Formula Alternatives](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics: Safe infant formula alternatives during the shortage](#)