

To: Included Health Navigation Clients

From: Included Health Clinical Team

Date: May 18, 2022

Subject: Baby Formula Shortage Resources

The Included Health pediatric and newborn clinical team has been aware of, and monitoring, the infant formula shortage over the last several months. The initial shortage was isolated to the specialty formulas for which there are no store brands available. This was very distressing for our families and continues to be a significant problem. We have been encouraging families that need specialty formulas to speak with their local providers to discuss alternatives. In addition we have encouraged them to access WIC if they are eligible, or reach out to their local hospitals who may have additional supplies.

As the formula shortage has become more widespread and now includes all infant formulas, we have been working closely with our new mothers to encourage breastfeeding whenever possible and we are providing as many resources as possible to support them. These resources include how to access a breast pump through their insurance, educational materials and lactation support groups and programs. In addition, we encourage all employers to also help in supporting our new mothers as they return to work so that they can continue to be able to supply breast milk for their infants. This is often the time when breastfeeding falls off and milk supplies decrease.

In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics has provided guidance on alternatives for urgent situations when no formula is available:

- For infants younger than 6 months, the recommendation is to only use infant formula or breast milk. Parents should reach out to their pediatrician or WIC office if they urgently need infant formula.
- For infants older than 6 months, the safest option is to supplement with whole cow's milk and other iron rich foods or iron supplementation.
- Children closer to 1 year old can use toddler formulas for short periods of time but for no greater than 2 weeks.

Included Health is also working on educating our clinical team members on how to educate mothers with infants younger than 3 months on relactation, if they are agreeable. This will allow mothers to potentially reestablish their milk supply. It is a slow process and the infant may need supplementation with formula or donor breast milk, if available.

We have also begun to collect a list of milk banks that offer donor breast milk for sale to parents with infants at home. This is not common as most milk banks only sell to hospitals, and milk is typically reserved for the infants that are sickest / most in need. Donor breast milk is also costly to the parents. On average, a 3oz bottle of donor breast milk will cost between \$15-\$20. In speaking with some milk banks, they are feeling the pressure to help as best they can in this crisis, but have expressed that they often don't have enough supply for the infants who need it most. They welcome donors.

We are also counseling all of our families not to buy more than a two week supply of formula at a time in order to help with equitable access.

Most importantly, we are educating our families about the dangers associated with making your own infant formula at home, ordering formula from distributors outside the United States, and adding excess water to powdered formula to make it last longer. All of these alternatives could cause major health problems for their infant, including death. If any family cannot access formula for their infant we encourage them to call us and we will attempt to assist them in locating formula, or depending on age, review the above additional options for feeding their baby.

Please reach out to your Client Success team if you have any additional questions – we all want to provide as much support as possible during this difficult time for families.

Thank you,

The Clinical staff at Included Health,
under the leadership of Dr. Jennifer McGuirl, Head of Neonatology