

# Soy Infant Formula

## Frequently asked questions



### When is soy formula needed?

Soy formula can be used when babies cannot be breastfed or when standard formula cannot be used or is not tolerated. These situations include:

- Babies of families who are strictly vegan (and are not breastfeeding).
- Babies over six months of age who cannot tolerate standard infant formula but can tolerate soy.
- Babies who have the medical disorder 'galactosaemia'.

### What is soy infant formula?

Soy infant formulas are created from the soybean plant, using soy protein and other added nutrients such as fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals to make it similar in nutrient composition to cow's milk infant formula.

### Are there alternatives to soy infant formula?

Yes. In situations where babies cannot tolerate standard formulas or soy infant formula, there are modified protein formulas or amino acid based formulas that are available. This can be discussed with your child's Doctor or Dietitian.

### Why are there concerns about soy infant formula?

The soybean contains 'isoflavones'. Isoflavones belong to the family of plant 'phytoestrogens' and have a similar but not identical chemical structure to human hormone oestrogen (oestrodial) Although they have similarities in the way they behave in the human body, their strength is over 10,000 times weaker than oestrodial. Overall, isoflavones are thought to have beneficial effects on health, particularly as adults. Isoflavones also naturally occur in beans and other legumes such as peanuts and chickpeas.

### Is Soy Formula safe?

Yes, soy formula has been found to be safe for use in babies.

An expert panel has evaluated all studies completed over a 96-year period, comparing babies fed soy infant formulas with babies fed standard infant formulas. The panel found no differences in growth or development between the two groups.

Soy foods have a long safety record in traditional Asian populations where soy has been regularly consumed for thousands of years. Indications of any potential harmful effects from isoflavones have been noted only in laboratory and rodent studies when high levels of isoflavones have been used – these effects have not been shown in humans. The safety of soy has been thoroughly reviewed and soy foods are permitted for use under NZ's food safety regulations.

### References:

- BDA Food Fact Sheet: <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/soya2017>
- British Journal of Nutrition (2014), 111, 1340–1360 2013 Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis Safety of soya-based infant formulas in children



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