

Soy Infant Formula - information

When is soy formula needed?

If babies cannot be breastfed and can't take standard formula then soy formula can be used. For example:

- Babies of families who are strictly vegan (and the baby is not breast fed).
- Babies who cannot tolerate standard infant formula but can tolerate soy*.
- Babies who have the medical disorder 'galactosaemia'.

*Usually only recommended in babies over six months old (*Cow's milk allergy*, ASCIA 2019)

What is soy infant formula?

Soy infant formulas are made from the soybean plant. Other nutrients such as fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals have been added to make it similar to cow's milk-based infant formula.

Are there alternatives to soy infant formula?

Yes. If babies cannot tolerate standard formulas or soy infant formula, there are special formulas available. There are strict criteria about who can be given these formulas on prescription.

Are there health concerns about soy infant formula?

Isoflavones naturally occur in beans and other legumes, including soy beans. Isoflavones belong to the family of plant (Phyto)-oestrogens which are similar to the human hormone, oestrogen (oestradiol).

However, Isoflavones are 10,000 times weaker than oestradiol.

Harm has not been seen in humans when taken regularly as a main nutrient source in studies.

Isoflavones may actually also have beneficial effects on health, particularly for adults.

Is Soy Formula safe?

Yes, soy formula is safe for babies.

A big study compared babies fed soy infant formulas with babies fed standard infant formulas. There were no differences in growth or development between the two groups. Soy foods have been a part of the diet in Asia for thousands of years. The safety of soy has been reviewed and soy foods are allowed under the FSANZ Food Code and the New Zealand 2014 Food Act and related regulations.

References:

ASCIA Cows Milk Allergy: <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/food-allergy/cows-milk-dairy-allergy>

British Journal of Nutrition (2014), 111, 1340–1360 2013 Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis Safety of soya-based infant formulas in children

Frontiers in Pediatrics (2020) Use of Soy-Based formulas and Cow's Milk Allergy: Lights & Shadows. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2020.591988>

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