

Pointers For Parents

INFANT NUTRITION UPDATE: What Parents Should Know About Infant Formulas

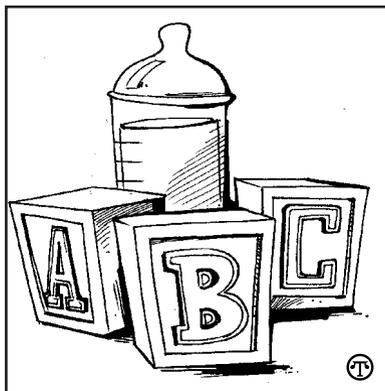
(NAPSA)—Medical experts across the country agree that breastfeeding is the gold standard in infant nutrition. However, if a mother cannot breastfeed, decides to supplement her feedings or chooses not to breastfeed for any reason, it's important to talk with the baby's doctor because not all infant formulas are the same.

When selecting an infant formula, the most critical factor is whether it helps babies grow and develop like breastfed infants. While it is easy to see babies physically growing on the outside, it's not so easy to determine how a baby is developing on the inside.

"Parents today need to understand that there are important differences among infant formulas," said Bridget Swinney, M.S., R.D., a mother of two and author of *Healthy Food for Healthy Kids* and *Eating Expectantly: The Practical and Tasty Guide to Prenatal Nutrition*. "In fact, clinical research shows that basic compositional variations in formulas, such as the type of fat blend, can make a difference in terms of development."

Fat is a rich source of energy and accounts for about 50 percent of the calories in breast milk and infant formula. Fat also provides essential fatty acids, which are important for the baby's growing organs, including the brain. The right amount and balance of these fatty acids is important for infants to support rapid growth and development.

Two nutrients that play a key role in visual and mental development are the fatty acids docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and arachidonic acid (ARA). Infants receive DHA and ARA from the



mother through the placenta while in the womb and through breast milk after birth, and they can make DHA and ARA naturally from precursor fatty acids present in breast milk and infant formula.

Recently, some infant formula manufacturers began adding DHA and ARA to their infant formulas to aid in visual and mental development. A recent study in *Pediatrics* found that babies fed Similac® With Iron had visual and mental development like that of infants fed breast milk.

The results from this study suggest babies can produce sufficient amounts of DHA and ARA naturally from the unique fat blend found in Similac With Iron. Similac® Advance® is now available for those parents who prefer an infant formula supplemented with DHA and ARA.

Studies show infants fed formulas without palm or palm olein oils had higher levels of fat and calcium absorption. ®

Like Similac With Iron, Similac Advance has been clinically shown to support mental and visual development no different than

that of breast fed babies.

Not all formulas contain the same type of fat blend. Palm and palm olein oils are the primary source of fat in many infant formulas because these oils can result in a formula with a fat blend that appears similar to the fat composition of breast milk. However, formula fat blends containing palm and palm olein oils affect fat and calcium absorption.

Recent studies have shown that infants fed formulas without palm and palm olein oils as the major fat source had a *greater* percentage of fat and calcium absorption than infants fed infant formulas with these oils. This means that palm and palm olein oils make the fat and calcium less absorbable by the infant.

A study published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* found that infants fed Similac With Iron, a formula that contains no palm or palm olein oil, had 53 percent greater calcium absorption than when the same infants were fed the other leading brand containing palm olein oil. Preliminary results from another recent study presented at The Society for Pediatric Research found that babies fed Similac With Iron had greater bone mineral content and bone mineral density at ages three and six months than babies fed the other leading brand containing palm olein oil as the major fat source.

The bottom line: recent research suggests there are key differences in infant formulas, so if you choose to feed an infant formula be sure to ask your doctor which formula is right for your baby.