2022 Infant Formula Shortages

Formula Overview and Recall Background

- The U.S. formula market has 3 main formula manufacturers: Abbott/Similac (under recall), Mead Johnson/Enfamil, Gerber/ Good Start. Store and generic brands are also available.
- The current formula issues impact 2 groups:
    - Infants on standard infant formulas (milk and soy based)- Similac, Enfamil and Good Start
    - Babies and children on specialized formulas to address medical conditions
- The supply chain has been tight due to COVID-19 over the past year.
- On 2/17/22 the FDA announced an investigation of Cronobacter and Salmonella in certain powdered infant formulas made at the Abbott manufacturing plant in Sturgis, Michigan.
    - **FDA Investigation of Cronobacter Infections: Powdered Infant Formula (February 2022) | FDA**
- The formula recall resulted in a huge portion of both standard and specialty products, in the powder form, being pulled from the market.
- On 5/12/22 the CDC announced that its investigation is closed, with no additional cases identified as part of the investigation. The FDA continues to work on supply chain and food safety issues.

Overview of WIC

- Illinois provides WIC services through a network of 96 local agency providers. Providers are primarily local health departments as well as community-based organizations and hospitals.
- About **½** of the babies born in Illinois participate in the WIC program in the first year of life. As of March 2022, there were 43,568 infants active on the program
- About 30% of infants start out doing some breastfeeding but only around 9% breastfeed exclusively for 6 months.
- The USDA requires the WIC program in each state to have an infant formula rebate contract.
    - Illinois is currently in a contract with Mead Johnson (MJ).
    - The contract provides on average $3.7 million dollars per month back to Illinois WIC to supplement the WIC Food dollars used to pay for all WIC food benefit redemptions.
    - Illinois WIC participants redeem on average $11.2 million in food benefits each month.
    - The contract identifies specific formula items and can sizes which qualify for the rebate.
    - Under the contract only MJ products can be issued for Illinois WIC participants using standard infant formulas.
    - Specialty formulas are issued with a physician prescription and are not part of the rebate contract process.
- Illinois has approximately 1,500 authorized retail vendors accepting WIC EBT cards and 16 WIC Food and Nutrition Centers (FNC) in the Chicago areas which serve as "WIC Groceries". The FNCs may only be used by WIC participants.

Messages to Consumers and WIC Families

- We are using every available tool to assist families to get the formula their babies need
- Local WIC clinics and the State WIC office are happy to help especially with accessing specialty formulas
- Formula supplies are increasing and it is critical that individuals buy only the formula they need in the next few days. Buying more formula than needed or while one is still pregnant keeps it from babies who are hungry now.
- IDHS: Having Trouble Finding Formula? (**state.il.us**)

Infant Formula Safety Tips - Steps to Ensure the Safety of Infant Formula

- Do not feed your baby cow's milk until they are about 12 months old, unless no alternative is available and you've talked with your child's medical provider.
- Choose an infant formula that's safe. For more information on choosing an infant formula that's safe, visit the **CDC** and **FDA** pages on the topic.
- Don't make homemade infant formula. See the **FDA's page** for more information.
- Do not buy formula online that comes from outside the United States. This formula could be counterfeit, for example it might have a fake label with a wrong use-by-date.
- Properly prepare and store infant formula. For information on proper preparation and storage, visit the **CDC's page**.
- Properly clean, sanitize, and store infant feeding items. Visit the **CDC's page** for more information.
- Always wash your hands. For information on how and when to wash your hands, visit the **CDC's page**.