

Pharmacy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the Specialty Infant Formula Shortage

There is a shortage of specialty infant formula following the temporary shutdown of Abbott Nutrition's U.S.-based facility earlier this year. The Ministry of Health (Health) and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) are working with Health Canada to address concerns around the supply of specialty infant formula, specifically extensively hydrolyzed infant formulas and amino acid-based formulas.

The following FAQ will assist pharmacies in managing the specialty formula shortage.

1) Where can I get specialty infant formula for my patients?

- Pharmacies may reach out to other pharmacies to determine availability at other locations.
- Extensively hydrolyzed formulas will be available through your regular wholesaler, while amino acid-based formulas will be available through McKesson and Shoppers Drug Mart distributors only. To preserve supply, pharmacies are requested to order **based on need only** and not keep surplus stock on hand. For some products, the manufacturer has put ordering limits in place to preserve supply.
- Providing families with enough supply for only 7 to 10 days will also help to ensure that all babies in need have the opportunity to receive supply. Alberta Health Services has developed a guidance document to assist pharmacists in determining how much of each product should be provided at a time; however each child's situation should be individually evaluated. The guidance document can be found on medSask's Drug Shortages and Discontinuations [website](#) under "Formula, Infant." The guidance document has been adapted to include Saskatchewan information on how to contact a local outpatient dietitian if additional assistance is needed.
- Additional supply will be imported into Canada from various countries through Health Canada's interim order. A list of approved formulations can be found on Health Canada's [website](#).
- When providing imported products to your patients, pharmacies are required to provide additional printed label information which can be found with the list of approved products. More information on these products can be found on medSask's Drug Shortages and Discontinuations [website](#).

2) How can I support families during this shortage?

- Parents of babies and children with allergies and certain medical conditions who need the specialty formula should talk with their health care provider. This could include their family doctor, pediatrician, nurse practitioner or registered dietitian. Health Canada has also developed a decision tree, which aims to support health care providers in temporarily guiding parents and caregivers towards the most appropriate product. This can be found on medSask's Drug Shortages and Discontinuations [website](#).
- Health Canada has also developed a [guidance document](#) for parents.

3) Will these imported products be eligible for those families that are covered under the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) or Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch (DPEBB) nutritional support programs?

- Yes, NIHB and DPEBB will be adding these imported products to their list of eligible products as they become available.
- DPEBB's Therapeutic Nutritional Products Program will apply a client's current coverage to an approved alternative if a substitution is required due to the shortage. A reassessment of program coverage may be requested based on the cost of the alternative product.