Reflective questions:

• Are you aware that there are differences in the composition of the various formula milks on the market?
• Can you explain the differences between the different formula milk stages and brands?

Choosing an infant formula can be a difficult process for parents. Although their main ingredients are strictly regulated, their composition can differ in many ways, so it is important that you understand these differences and what they may mean for babies.

Key additional nutrients

Thanks to advances in science and technology, some infant formulas now include ingredients that aim to replicate other key ingredients found in breastmilk. Different brands contain different amounts of these ingredients and some may contain none at all. The key ingredients that you should be aware of are:

• **Galacto- and fructo-oligosaccharides (GOS/FOS)** – Non-digestible carbohydrates that occur naturally in breastmilk, as well as in some fruits, grains and vegetables. They feed the beneficial bifidobacteria in the gut, encouraging their growth at the expense of potentially harmful bacteria.

  Research indicates that infants fed a formula containing GOS/FOS, compared to those fed a formula without, have a third fewer infections per year, 53 per cent lower incidence of allergies, and a 51 per cent reduction in atopic dermatitis.

• **Omega-3 and omega-6 LCP fatty acids** – Breastmilk contains long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LCPs) which contribute to normal brain and eye development.

Main components

Most infant formula milks are made from cows’ milk that has been modified to make it suitable for babies. Like breastmilk, cows’ milk contains fats, carbohydrates (in the form of lactose) and two types of proteins - whey and casein. In first infant formulas, which are suitable for use from birth, the whey to casein ratio is usually 60:40, which is similar to breastmilk. Formulas that contain a greater proportion of casein (20:80), which takes longer to digest than whey, are also available. These formulas may be used to delay the inappropriately early onset of weaning in ‘hungrier babies’.

Follow-on formulas are suitable for babies from six months. They contain additional iron, calcium and vitamin D to support normal brain, bone and teeth development.

*In infants at risk of atopy.*
Breast is best

Breastmilk provides a baby with perfectly balanced nutrition, which is why both the Department of Health and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby’s life. However, many mums either choose not to or can’t breastfeed. In this instance, infant formula milks provide the only alternative to breastmilk.

The Infant Formula and Follow on Milk Regulations put healthcare professionals in the position to give parents the important support and advice that they need.

- **Nucleotides** – These form the building blocks of every cell in the body and help to support the immune system⁵,⁶.
- **Vitamins A, C and D** – The antioxidant vitamins A and C are important for immune response and the healing process, while vitamin D supports the development of healthy bones and teeth.

Who can offer advice?

Under the 2007 Infant Formula and Follow on Milk Regulations, only healthcare professionals can give advice on infant formula milks. This puts healthcare professionals in an ideal position to give advice to parents on using first formula milks for the first time or on changing the milk they use.

Parent consultation

A mum who has been breastfeeding for three months would like to introduce formula milk to her baby’s diet. She had thought they were all the same, but having looked at the infant milks available, she is confused by the different ingredients mentioned on the labels and wants to know more about them.

Reassure

As a healthcare professional, you can reassure her that all formula milks on the UK market are produced in accordance with EU standards, so will be safe for her baby. However, some products contain additional ingredients that are included for specific benefits.

Educate

Explain the reasons why these additional ingredients are included. For instance, the wording GOS and FOS on pack refers to non-digestible carbohydrates (found in breastmilk) that may aid healthy digestion and reduce the baby’s chances of developing allergies and infections²,³. LCPs and nucleotides may also be included to provide benefits in terms of brain and eye development and support for the immune system. Some brands contain higher levels of these than others. It is also important to point out that since her baby is three months old, he should be given a first infant formula rather than a follow-on milk as these are only suitable from six months onwards.

Aptamil with Pronutra+

Aptamil’s special understanding of breastmilk has inspired its most advanced range of infant formulas. All Aptamil standard milks now contain Pronutra+, a unique blend of ingredients that you will not find in any other baby milk brand.

The formula:

- A unique, patented blend of galacto- and fructo-oligosaccharides (GOS/FOS), which has been shown to reduce the incidence of allergic manifestations for up to five years⁷
- Increased level of DHA (omega-3) to support brain and normal visual development
- Vitamins A, C, D and iron to support normal cognitive development and immune function.

Also available:

- Aptamil Anti-Reflux for the dietary management of frequent reflux and regurgitation†
- Aptamil Comfort for the dietary management of colic and constipation†
- Aptamil Lactose Free for the dietary management of lactose intolerance†
- Aptamil Pepti 1 and 2 for the dietary management of cows’ milk allergy†
- Aptamil Growing Up milk 1+ yr and 2+ yr for toddlers aged one to three years.

†For use under medical supervision.

Breast is best

Breastmilk provides a baby with perfectly balanced nutrition, which is why both the Department of Health and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby’s life. However, many mums either choose not to or can’t breastfeed. In this instance, infant formula milks provide the only alternative to breastmilk.

The Infant Formula and Follow on Milk Regulations put healthcare professionals in the position to give parents the important support and advice that they need.

- **Nucleotides** – These form the building blocks of every cell in the body and help to support the immune system⁵,⁶.
- **Vitamins A, C and D** – The antioxidant vitamins A and C are important for immune response and the healing process, while vitamin D supports the development of healthy bones and teeth.

Who can offer advice?

Under the 2007 Infant Formula and Follow on Milk Regulations, only healthcare professionals can give advice on infant formula milks. This puts healthcare professionals in an ideal position to give advice to parents on using first formula milks for the first time or on changing the milk they use.

Parent consultation

A mum who has been breastfeeding for three months would like to introduce formula milk to her baby’s diet. She had thought they were all the same, but having looked at the infant milks available, she is confused by the different ingredients mentioned on the labels and wants to know more about them.

Reassure

As a healthcare professional, you can reassure her that all formula milks on the UK market are produced in accordance with EU standards, so will be safe for her baby. However, some products contain additional ingredients that are included for specific benefits.

Educate

Explain the reasons why these additional ingredients are included. For instance, the wording GOS and FOS on pack refers to non-digestible carbohydrates (found in breastmilk) that may aid healthy digestion and reduce the baby’s chances of developing allergies and infections²,³. LCPs and nucleotides may also be included to provide benefits in terms of brain and eye development and support for the immune system. Some brands contain higher levels of these than others. It is also important to point out that since her baby is three months old, he should be given a first infant formula rather than a follow-on milk as these are only suitable from six months onwards.

Aptamil with Pronutra+

Aptamil’s special understanding of breastmilk has inspired its most advanced range of infant formulas. All Aptamil standard milks now contain Pronutra+, a unique blend of ingredients that you will not find in any other baby milk brand.

The formula:

- A unique, patented blend of galacto- and fructo-oligosaccharides (GOS/FOS), which has been shown to reduce the incidence of allergic manifestations for up to five years⁷
- Increased level of DHA (omega-3) to support brain and normal visual development
- Vitamins A, C, D and iron to support normal cognitive development and immune function.

Also available:

- Aptamil Anti-Reflux for the dietary management of frequent reflux and regurgitation†
- Aptamil Comfort for the dietary management of colic and constipation†
- Aptamil Lactose Free for the dietary management of lactose intolerance†
- Aptamil Pepti 1 and 2 for the dietary management of cows’ milk allergy†
- Aptamil Growing Up milk 1+ yr and 2+ yr for toddlers aged one to three years.

†For use under medical supervision.