

More American Children Face Hospitalization as Infant Formula Shortage Continues

Description

USA: Another state is reporting that American children are facing hospitalization because of a shortage of baby formula. Georgia officials are reporting children with medical conditions are hospitalized at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta because their families could not find the food their infants need.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported:

A spokesperson for Children's said Thursday all the children hospitalized had specific dietary needs and any changes to their formula needed to be carefully monitored to make they could be well tolerated. It can be a long, complicated process to find a substitution that meets the children's nutritional needs, and then make sure the new formula won't trigger any negative and potentially dangerous reactions, such as dehydration or diarrhea.

The hospital declined to provide a specific number of children hospitalized, but said some were hospitalized back in February when a formula plant was closed, and others were hospitalized more recently as the formula shortage has worsened.

Children's spokesperson said the hospitalizations included babies as well as older children and that all have since been discharged.

News of the local hospitalizations come as the baby formula shortage has reached a high pitch, with parents desperately looking for formula and stores depleted. White House and federal agencies this week have taken steps to restart the Abbott Nutrition's Michigan formula plant, the largest in the U.S., which has been closed since February due to contamination problems. President Biden on Wednesday invoked the Defense Production Act to direct suppliers of formula ingredients to prioritize delivery to manufacturers. Even so, Abbott has estimated it could take at least two months for the supply to return to stores.

Physicians and health experts say that finding substitutions is not easy and can even be dangerous.

Dr. Stephen Thacker, a pediatric infectious disease specialist and associate chief medical officer at Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia, says in the article:

This is certainly a challenging time for many parents. It's important for families to know that most children can safely switch to other formulas without any risk of harm. If your child needs a specialty formula, speak with your doctor to make sure you have a plan for your child should there be no more local supply."

Dr. Hugo Scornik, the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics Georgia chapter, said parents should not water down formula, try to make their own off recipes found online, or give them cow's milk.

by Penny Starr

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