

SALTWATER INTRUSION

FACT SHEET: Infant Formula Mixing Safety during Saltwater Intrusion



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Due to a lack of rainfall up north, the water levels of the lower Mississippi River are extremely low, allowing salt water from the Gulf of Mexico to come upstream. This phenomenon, known as saltwater intrusion, can affect local water supplies because many public drinking water systems in south Louisiana rely on fresh water from the Mississippi River.

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), along with regional, state and federal partners, is actively monitoring the situation and conducting water quality testing and analysis to provide regular updates to the general public and healthcare providers about impacts to water systems and necessary precautions.

We urge residents of the Southeast Louisiana parishes affected by the saltwater intrusion to stay informed by signing up for their local text alert systems. Visit emergency.la.gov/saltwater to get the latest updates on the saltwater intrusion in southeast Louisiana.



Does salt in drinking water pose a health risk to pregnant women or infants?

Yes. Pregnant women should not consume water with high levels of salt, nor should salt water be mixed with powdered or liquid concentrate infant formula.

How much chloride in the water is considered unsafe?

Water that exceeds 250 mg per liter of chloride should not be consumed by pregnant women and should not be used to mix with infant formula.

How do I know if my water has too much salt/is not safe for my baby?

- If your water system is under a saltwater advisory (or "High Sodium Water Advisory"), your tap water should not be consumed, used for cooking and should not be used to mix infant formula.
- Water systems will notify their customers of High Sodium Water Advisories. You can find the current list of High Sodium Water Advisories at <https://ldh.la.gov/page/4595>.

What's safe for infants if local water becomes contaminated with salt water?

- Bottled water should be used to prepare powdered or liquid concentrate formula, or ready-to-feed formula (which does not require any preparation with water) should be utilized.
- For WIC participants, LDH will continue to stock emergency bottled water at no cost at the WIC clinics in Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes. Find WIC clinic locations at <https://ldh.la.gov/page/Louisiana-WIC>.

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»» Is ready-to-feed formula eligible under WIC benefits?

- Certain ready-to-feed formula products are WIC-approved food items. WIC participants who are prescribed ready-to-feed formula can purchase those products with their WIC benefits. Your WIC clinic can help you determine if your infant's formula is available as ready-to-feed.

Note: Increased demand for ready-to-feed formula may lead to items being less available at stores in affected areas. Not all WIC retailers currently stock ready-to-feed formula. Families are encouraged to check their local WIC retailer for ready-to-feed availability before visiting their WIC clinic to have their benefits temporarily switched.