

FROM THE ACTING CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER
Dr Ian Carson



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

HSS(MD)11/2006

To: Consultant Paediatricians
Consultant Obstetricians
General Practitioners
Community Pharmacists
Directors of Public Health HSS Boards
Directors of Pharmacy HSS Trusts
Directors of Nursing HSS Boards
Medical Directors of HSS Trusts
Nursing Directors of HSS Trusts (for distribution to
Midwives and Health Visitors)

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3SR
Tel: 028905 20601
Fax: 028 9052 0574
Email: ian.carson@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD)11/2006
Date: 31 March 2006

Dear Colleague

REVISED GUIDANCE ON PREPARATION AND STORAGE OF INFANT FORMULA MILK

We are writing to advise you that the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards has recently issued an opinion in relation to the microbiological risks in powdered infant and follow-on formulae. The Panel concluded that *Salmonella* and *Enterobacter sakazakii* are the micro-organisms of greatest concern (www.efsa.eu.int/science/biohaz/biohaz_opinions/691_en.html). Although infections with these micro-organisms from formula milk are rare, the risk can be reduced by following guidelines.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland advise all health professionals, particularly nurses, midwives and health visitors to change/revise/update their advice to mothers on the preparation and storage of infant formula milk in the home.

Health Professionals should re-emphasise to parents:

- The importance of good hygiene practices in preparing and storing formula feeds from powdered formula.
- Failure to follow the manufacturer's guidelines may increase the chances of a baby becoming ill.

Infant formula powder is not sterile; the risks associated with using powdered infant formula milk are reduced if:

- Feeds are made up using boiled water that is greater than 70°C; in practice, this means using water that has been left to cool for no more than half an hour.

- Feeds are made up fresh for each feed; storing made up formula milk may increase the chance of a baby becoming ill and should be avoided.
- Any left over milk is thrown away.
- Parents who are going out with their babies and require a feed for later, are advised that the safest option is to take an individual pre-sealed carton of ready made formula milk. The next safest alternative is to carry a measured amount of formula powder in a small sterilised container, an empty sterilised feeding bottle, and recently boiled hot water in a flask which is ever only used for this purpose. The feed can then be made up when it is required. Parents are advised to be cautious as there is a danger of scalding with this method.
- The temperature of the feed should be tested, and if required, cooled by holding the bottle, with cap covering the teat, under running water.

A new leaflet on bottle-feeding for parents supporting this revised guidance has been produced by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland and will be available in April 2006. The Pregnancy Book and the Birth to Five Book will be updated to reflect this advice before the next print run.

If you have any queries about this letter or advice please contact Mr John Breen, Investing for Health Team, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SQ, telephone 028 90 520772.

Yours sincerely

DR IAN CARSON
Acting Chief Medical Officer

DR NORMAN MORROW
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

MARTIN BRADLEY
Chief Nursing Officer

This letter is available at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and also on the DHSSPS Extranet which can be accessed directly at <http://extranet.dhsspsni.gov.uk> or by going through the HPSS Web at <http://www.n-i.nhs.uk> and clicking on DHSSPS.