

EMBARGOED REPORT

The Kid's Food Guarantee update – November 2023

First infant milk formula – has anything changed since June?

While breastfeeding is recommended for all mothers and infants, some caregivers cannot, or choose not to breastfeed. A large number of barriers and a lack of support mean that exclusive breastfeeding is not always possible for many parents and caregivers in the UK. Up until the age of six months, breastmilk or first infant formula are a baby's sole source of nutrition and hydration. Safe, nutritionally adequate, and affordable first infant formula is therefore essential where caregivers cannot, or choose not to, breastfeed or provide breastmilk for their infants.

The cost of living crisis has seen steep increases in the price of formula

First Steps Nutrition [reports](#) that between March 2021 (before food prices started to rise) and April 2023, the seven standard powdered first infant formulas sold by the market leaders increased in cost by an average of 24%, with some brands seeing a much higher rate of inflation. For example, the only own-brand infant formula on the market (ALDI's Mamia brand) increased by 45%. This poses a huge risk to children's health given that attempts to cut costs, for example by reducing feeding frequency or over-diluting powdered infant formula, come with worrying health risks as babies and young children are more susceptible to food-borne illness than adults and have high energy and nutrient needs for growth and development.

What we did

We selected six standard first infant formula milk products sold in the UK and then found the price of these brands as listed online at each of the nine major UK retailers: ALDI, Asda, Co-op, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco, and Waitrose. For families looking for the best offers available, in-store prices can be lower than the price of equivalent products online, but in order to compare like for like we have used online prices.

Data is collected on the fifth of every month. We compared the price in November to the prices of the same products in June when we first started monitoring the price of first infant formula. We looked at the price of formula sold in larger tins (typically containing 800-900g of formula) rather than in smaller portion sizes, or per 100ml, as this provides a more realistic reflection of typical shopping behaviour. For further details on our methodology please see our [technical report](#) and [our last formula update](#).

What we found in November

In November we once again found a large range of prices, both across different brands of first infant formula, as well as the same brand when stocked across different retailers. Prices range from £9.39 to £15.25 for a standard tin of regular powdered first infant formula (800-900g). Despite regulation ensuring that all first infant formula brands are nutritionally comparable this means that the highest priced tin of infant formula is 71% more expensive than the lowest priced product.

There are no first infant formulas available that are affordable with the Healthy Start allowance, which is £8.50 per week, or £34 per month for those with children aged under one.

Tins of first infant milk formula are most expensive at Waitrose and The Co-operative Group, and most affordable at Iceland and Aldi.

Infant Formula Milk Powder(s) per unit/tin: November 2023

	Aptamil 1 First Infant Milk From Birth (800g)	Cow & Gate 1 First Milk Powder (800g)	HiPP Organic Infant Milk (800g)	Mamia First Infant Milk (900g)	SMA Little Steps First Milk 1 From Birth (800g)	Kendamil First Infant Milk Stage 1 (800g)
Aldi	NA	£9.19*	NA	£9.39	NA	NA
Asda	£14.50	£10.50	£13.50	NA	£9.75	£10.00*
Co-op	£15.00	£10.75	NA	NA	£11.50	NA
Iceland	£12.00	£9.75	NA	NA	NA	£9.25
Morrisons	£14.50	£10.50	£13.50	NA	£9.75	NA
Ocado	£14.50	£10.50	£13.50	NA	£9.75	£12.00
Sainsbury's	£14.50	£10.50	£13.50	NA	£9.75	£12.00
Tesco	£14.50	£10.50	£13.50	NA	£9.75	£11.00*
Waitrose	£15.25	£11.00	£14.20	NA	NA	£12.60

Note: Prices are tracked online on 5th Nov. NA means either product is out of stock/unavailable when checked online.

Note: Cheapest indicated in GREEN & expensive in ORANGE. £9.19* is for 700g of the product. £10.00 & £11.00* are for 900g of the products.



What's changed since June?

Since we started monitoring the price of formula in June there have been some small but positive changes in pricing. Iceland cut the price of all infant formula in August, and in September Co-op announced that from October 11th they would standardize the price of infant formula, meaning that the price will be the same whether customers shop in London, elsewhere in the country, or online direct from Co-op. This is reflected in the drop in online prices for those formula brands stocked at Co-op in November's update.

However, these price changes are for the most part small, and at ASDA and Waitrose the price of some brands has actually increased since June. As input prices start to fall we hope that the price of consumer essentials starts to reduce. You can read our latest blog on profits and 'greedflation' exploring this topic in more detail [here](#).

Infant Formula Milk Powder(s) per unit/tin price change between June & November 2023

	Aptamil 1 First Infant Milk From Birth (800g)	Cow & Gate 1 First Milk Powder (800g)	HiPP Organic Infant Milk (800g)	Kendamil First Infant Milk Stage 1 (800g)	Mamia First Infant Milk (900g)	SMA Little Steps First Milk 1 From Birth (800g)
Aldi	NA	£9.19*	NA	NA	No change	NA
Asda	No change	No change	£13.50 (+£0.25)	No change	NA	No change
Co-op	£15.00 (-£0.95)	£10.75 (-£0.75)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Iceland	£12.00 (-£1.50)	£9.75 (-£0.75)	NA	£9.25 (-£2.25)	NA	NA
Morrisons	No change	No change	No change	NA	NA	No change
Ocado	No change	No change	No change	No change	NA	No change
Sainsbury's	No change	No change	No change	No change	NA	£9.75 (-£0.15)
Tesco	No change	No change	No change	No change	NA	No change
Waitrose	No change	No change	No change	£12.60 (+£0.76)	NA	NA

Note: Prices are tracked online on the 5th of each month. NA means the product is out of stock or was not available to purchase from the retailer in question in either June or November.

Note: £9.19* is for 700g of the product & price change could not be tracked as it is the new addition in Nov.



What needs to happen

The Food Foundation's Kid's Food Guarantee is calling for both manufacturers and retailers to insulate first infant milk formula from the worst of food price inflation. In addition, exploring the potential to offer supermarket own-brand formulas would be welcome as these typically have a lower price point than branded products.

The Kid's Food Guarantee is also asking retailers to continue to promote the Healthy Start scheme to their customers. Actions to support increased uptake could include:

- On pack labelling of products included within the scope of Healthy Start, with information about the scheme and directing customers towards the NHS website for further information.
- Running targeted in-store and/or online communication campaigns to promote the scheme to low income customers and those using stores in areas where there are high numbers of families eligible for the scheme.
- Exploring the potential to use loyalty card schemes to promote the scheme and incentivise the use of funds on healthy foods.

The Government also ought to act urgently to:

- 1) **Increase the value of the Healthy Start allowance in line with inflation.** There are currently no first infant formulas that are affordable within the Healthy Start allowance, which provides funds to spend on fruit, veg, milk and first infant formula for low income families with children aged under four in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In contrast, the value of the Scottish equivalent of the scheme - Best Start Food - was increased in line with inflation by 10.1% in April 2021.
- 2) **Clarify the law around the use of cash equivalents** (such as cash or points accrued on loyalty cards or retailer vouchers and giftcards sometimes provided by food banks to families) to buy formula.

Given that all first infant milk formulas are nutritionally comparable, health care professionals should also clearly communicate and signpost that there is no need for families to buy the more expensive products.

To find more data on formula prices visit our [Kids Food Guarantee dashboard](#).