

# Study: Many Poor Parents Water Down Infant Formula

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Things are not exactly rosy for some babies in tough economic times. In order to make ends meet, one in eight low-income parents stretch formula or just cut back on how much food they give their kids, according to a new study on infants published in the journal *Clinical Pediatrics* and reported by [MSNBC](#).

For the study, researchers at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center surveyed 144 parents of infants who attended the hospital's Pediatric Primary Care Center. Scientists asked parents to fill out a questionnaire that asked about food availability and sociodemographic characteristics such as age, race, education, ethnicity and insurance status.

Researchers found that although most of the parents at the clinic received food stamps and got kids' formula through a federal program called WIC, 65 percent of them said they didn't have enough food to feed their families. (Many said they ran out of WIC-supplied infant formula most months.) In addition, 15 percent of parents reported diluting formula with water in order to stretch supplies.

"We knew this was a high-risk population," said Andrew Beck, MD, a fellow in general academic pediatrics, and the study's coauthor. "But these numbers are still staggering— there will be a subset of children who will have what is called 'failure to thrive.'"

This "failure to thrive," Beck explained, could result in children developing learning disabilities and behavioral problems, as well as obesity.

And though some say breast-feeding is a natural solution to the problem, Beck countered that it isn't always biologically possible or feasible for moms to breast-feed their babies.

But, Beck added, "If they do, we continue to encourage it, and [we] have a breast-feeding clinic if they need it."

To help, Beck and his team are now focused on finding solutions so parents can feed their families. What's key, said Beck, is training physicians how to figure out who needs help.

Did you know that, in general, black moms are more likely to formula-feed their babies because

they know less about breast-feeding benefits? [Click here](#) to learn more.

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