

# Baby formula plant linked to US shortage resumes production

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The Abbott plant in Sturgis, Michigan (shown in this file photo) whose closure in February prompted a nationwide shortage of baby formula, has reopened, the company said on June 4, 2022.

Production resumed Saturday at an Abbott Nutrition baby formula plant

in the US whose closure helped fuel a crippling nationwide shortage.

The facility in Sturges, Michigan has met initial government sanitary requirements for reopening, the company said in a statement.

The plant, a major producer of [formula](#), shut down and issued a [product recall](#) in February after the death of two babies raised concerns over contamination.

Subsequent shortages were particularly worrying to parents of infants with allergies or with certain metabolic conditions. They desperately scoured stores and online sources for the specialized formulas.

Their concerns became so acute that President Joe Biden met virtually this week with infant-food executives and insisted his administration was doing everything it could to help.

The crisis, coming at a time when soaring inflation and supply-chain delays have fanned a growing sense of unease among many ordinary Americans, has been seized on by Biden critics to question the competence of his administration.

## **'Working hard'**

Abbott, which controls about 40 percent of the US baby food market, said Saturday that it was restarting production of its hypoallergenic EleCare formula and that the product should be back on store shelves around June 20.

"We're also working hard to fulfill the steps necessary to restart production of Similac and other formulas," Abbott said. "We will ramp production as quickly as we can while meeting all requirements."

The formula shortages, initially caused by supply chain blockages and a lack of workers due to the pandemic, were exacerbated when Abbott closed its Sturges plant.

The plant was shut down amid complaints the plant lacked adequate protections against contamination from bacteria—complaints echoed after a six-week inspection by US Food and Drug Administration agents.

"Frankly, the inspection results were shocking," FDA chief Robert Califf told members of a House subcommittee last month.

There was standing water in key equipment that presented "the potential for bacterial contamination," plus leaks in the roof and a lack of basic hygiene facilities, he said.

But Abbott officials, while apologizing for the formula shortage, have said there is no conclusive evidence linking the formula to infant illnesses or deaths.

For Biden, the issue had blown up into a political maelstrom.

He told reporters Wednesday that he was only informed about the looming problem in early April and that he had pulled all the levers of government to resolve shortages ever since.

"I don't think anyone anticipated the impact of the shutdown of one facility," Biden said at a virtual meeting with the executives from five companies helping to take up the slack caused by Abbott's problems.

"Once we learned the extent of it and how broad it was, it kicked everything into gear," Biden said.

However, some executives said they had been able to tell immediately in

February that a crisis was imminent.

"We knew from the very beginning," said Robert Cleveland, a [senior vice president](#) at Reckitt.

Other executives taking part in the video session represented Gerber, ByHeart, Bubs Australia and Perrigo. Notably absent was anyone from Abbott.

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