



## How to Talk to Patients About *Cronobacter* Infection

*Cronobacter* species are rare but clinically significant bacteria that can cause life-threatening infections in newborns, particularly sepsis and meningitis. Most infant infections occur within the first days or weeks of life.

Infection is more common in infants who are formula-fed. According to reports, powdered infant formula contamination is the most common vehicle of transmission among infants.<sup>1</sup>

In infants under 12 months, illness often begins with nonspecific symptoms such as fever, poor feeding, excessive irritability, or markedly decreased activity. Some infants may also be present with seizures.

*Cronobacter* infections can result in severe clinical outcomes, including:

- Sepsis
- Meningitis
- Urinary tract infections
- In the United States, approximately 20% of infants with *Cronobacter* meningitis or bloodstream infections have died.<sup>1</sup>



### Who Should Hear this Guidance?



This information is most important for parents and caregivers of high-risk infants, as well as pregnant women and parents who are considering using formula.

Infants at highest risk for severe illness from *Cronobacter* infections:

- **Infants younger than 2 months.** These infants have the greatest risk of developing meningitis if infected.
- **Infants born prematurely**, defined as birth before 37 weeks' gestation.
- **Infants with weakened immune systems.** This includes infants receiving immunosuppressive therapies for cancer or other medical conditions, those who have undergone organ transplantation, and infants with HIV infection or certain genetic immunodeficiencies.



## Why Healthcare Providers Should Talk to Their Patients:

In the U.S., healthcare providers are the most trusted and influential sources of food safety information.<sup>2</sup> As a trusted source for patients, healthcare providers play an important role in sharing guidance to help keep patients and their loved ones healthy and safe.

Clear, proactive guidance can prevent rare but severe *Cronobacter* infections in the most vulnerable infants.

### Talk to parents about how to prevent *Cronobacter* Infection:

#### Sample Script

*Cronobacter* are germs that live in the environment. They can be found on surfaces like kitchen counters, faucet handles, and your hands.

*Cronobacter* infections are rare, but they can be life threatening in newborns.

Your baby is at higher risk for *Cronobacter* infection because they are [premature, immunosuppressed, less than 2 months old], but there are ways you can help prevent infection.

#### Are you considering formula feeding or supplementing breastmilk with formula?

##### If no:

You can help keep your baby's milk safe by keeping your hands, feeding items, breast pumps, and surfaces clean.

*Cronobacter* is more common in formula-fed babies, so let me know if you are considering using formula, and we can talk about ways to prevent infection.

##### If yes:

If you use or plan to use powdered formula, it's important to prepare it safely, because powdered formula isn't sterile. There are steps you can take to reduce the risk of your baby getting sick by keeping feeding items and surfaces clean.

I recommend watching CDC's video on how to prevent *Cronobacter* infections in infants, which I will link in your health records. By following the video's steps, you can help keep your baby healthy and safe from infection.

**Share with them in your EHR:** the link to CDC's [How To Prevent \*Cronobacter\* Infection in Infants](#) video.



Image from CDC's [How To Prevent \*Cronobacter\* Infection in Infants](#) video

#### References:

1. Stryko, Jonathan, et al. "Food Safety and Invasive *Cronobacter* Infections during Early Infancy, 1961–2018." *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, vol. 26, no. 5, May 2020, pp. 857–865. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2605.190858>.
2. Food Insight. "2018 Food and Health Survey." *International Food Information Council Foundation*, 29 Jan. 2019, <https://foodinsight.org/2018-food-and-health-survey/>.