

Infant Formula Milk ?? Which is best?

Description

It is no secret that formula milk prices in Singapore are extremely high.

It certainly looks like prices here are overly inflated, especially when I see brands like Nestle NAN and Aptamil retail for less than half their price in Australia.

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The situation has gotten so dire that even [the government has set up a local task force to investigate the matter, and cautioned members of the public against using price as a gauge for quality while vowing to crack down on misleading advertising and labelling](#). They also brought in a few more brands to offer affordable alternatives to families who might not be able to afford to pay over \$50 per tin each time.

Nature One Dairy and Einmilk were mentioned as one of these more affordable options instead, so I set out to find out for myself if that was true.

But first,

Breastmilk > Formula Milk

If you've ever looked at a can of infant formula milk, you would probably have seen this message as a disclaimer. Let me elaborate why.

The differences between breastfed babies and those who were formula-fed have been widely documented, and breastfed babies have shown to have stronger immunity against infections as well as a lower risk for health problems later in life including diabetes, obesity and asthma. This is largely in part to how breast milk contains leukocytes (living cells that are found only in breast milk), antibodies, enzymes and hormones that make breast milk ideal. All these cannot be added to the formula.

But **not every mother might be able to breastfeed successfully**. There are various reasons, and from just among my circle of friends alone, these include:

- Nipples are too big for your baby's tiny mouth (*true story by my friends D and V*)
- Baby has a tongue tie (*my friends C and M*)
- The mother has a low milk supply (*including yours truly*)

I personally **could only yield 30ml** every 3 hours even though I was latching and/or pumping religiously, and despite following all the rules and dietary advice that's supposed to increase your breastmilk supply. So I had no choice but to supplement with formula.

If you have a good breastmilk supply, congratulations! You might want to skip the rest of this article unless you're intending to switch your baby over to formula at a later stage, usually after six months or more.

Why the heck is formula milk powder so expensive in Singapore?!

Just take a look at the prices I saw when I visited the supermarkets:

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From what I observe, it seems like thereâ??s little difference between the brands, except that the more expensive brands do a lot more marketing and use wordings on their packaging that often gives you a certain impression, including:

- S-26: Biofactors

- Aptamil: Pronutra+
- Similac: Gain IQ / Intelli-Pro
- Enfamil: A+
- NAN: Opti-Pro

With names like that, I would certainly get swayed into thinking that drinking that particular brand of formula milk will make my child smarter or healthier. But we all know that milk alone isn't the precursor of your child's intelligence, nor their success later on in life! But since all parents only want the best for our child, with names like these, surely no parent would take a gamble on their child's mental and physical development by going for an inferior formula milk.

These names certainly look like misleading marketing to me, and I wonder if our government will be clamping down on this soon?

But is expensive = better?

No. When I compared them against each other to compare the ingredients used and nutritional level, I found little difference between the formula milk brands.

In case you don't have the time to do your own comparison and you're skeptical, I've consolidated all my data into an excel sheet at the end of this article so you can review and decide for yourself. I've used Stage 2 as there were requests to remove Stage 1 lest some misunderstand this article as promoting formula milk over breastmilk.

Do you still think paying more means you'll be giving the best for your child?

Think again.

Key Findings

I spent several weeks (during my maternity leave) poring over the labels on the milk tins, and read up on multiple scientific research studies before I made my decision on which brand to feed my baby with. Here are the results of my research:

1. Price

Most of the brands retail for over \$50 per tin. [Dumex Mamil costs slightly lesser, but after AVA recalled their infant milk formula just last year, I'm not keen on taking any chances.](#)

There are three local brands that were introduced to the market after our government announced they would set up a task force to look into this matter:

- Nature One Dairy (\$29)
- Fairprice Gold (\$29)
- Einmilk (\$39)

2. Is more DHA / ARA / AA better for my baby?

Not necessarily. For years, milk manufacturers tout the benefits of DHA, but there has been [no conclusive evidence to prove that these make your baby smarter](#). [Even the FDA admits that there's mixed evidence that adding DHA and ARA to infant formulas is beneficial, and acknowledges that some studies suggest no benefit of adding these at all.](#)

By the way, I noticed that the milk brands do not use a standard abbreviation for arachidonic acid, so if you don't find ARA in the list, look for AA instead.

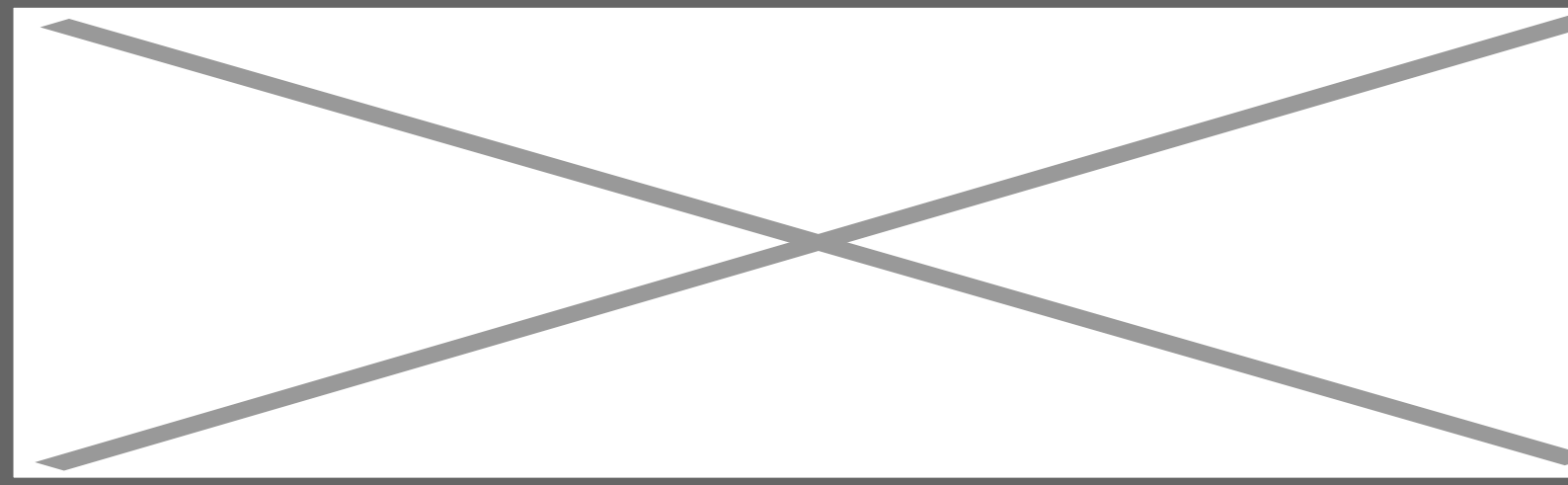
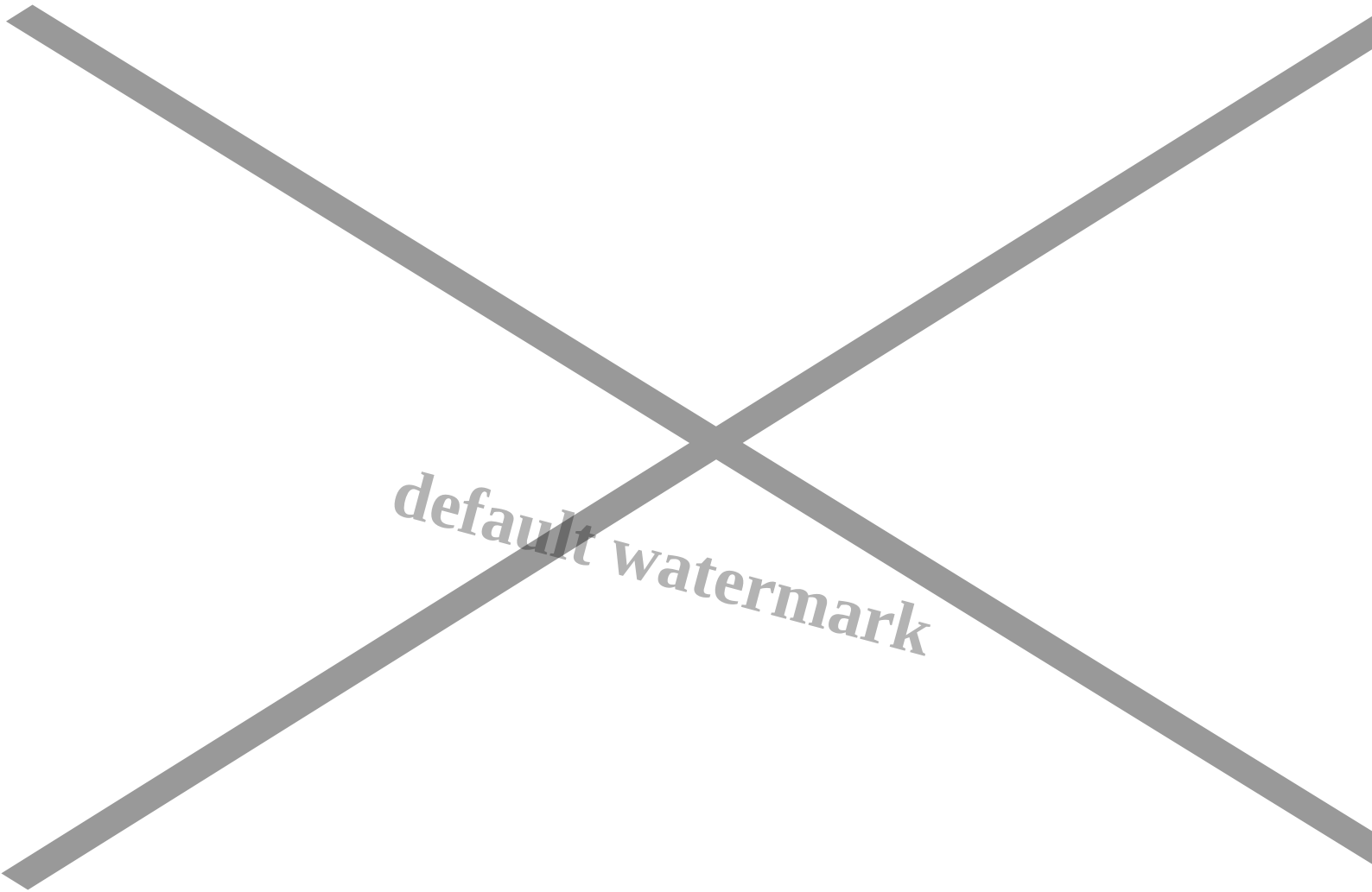
What they also fail to tell us is the controversy over the synthetic versions of these fatty acids that are manufactured for use in many infant formulas. [There could be some risks to ingesting these synthetic oils as well, such as vomiting, dehydration or even seizures requiring hospitalisation](#). Unfortunately, I'm not able to tell which brand uses the synthetic vs. non-synthetic versions here in Singapore.

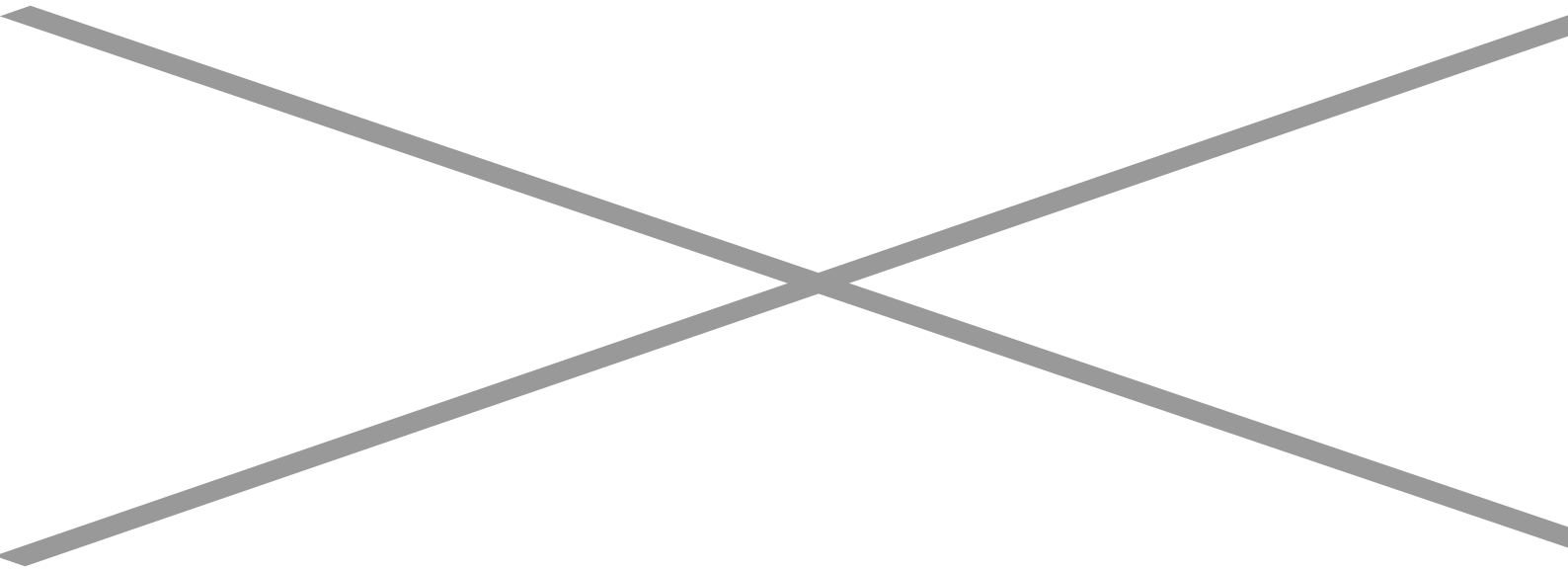
I was quite surprised to see that Enfamil, Similac and S-26 in fact get their source of DHA from algae ([search for cryptecodinium cohnii oil in the ingredient list](#)), whereas most of the brands including Nature One Dairy get it from fish oil [which is supposedly better](#).

It is still unclear how safe and effective these DHA and ARA additives are, and [this report also highlights the problems of industrially-produced DHA and ARA](#). Note that theyâ??re not illegal though.

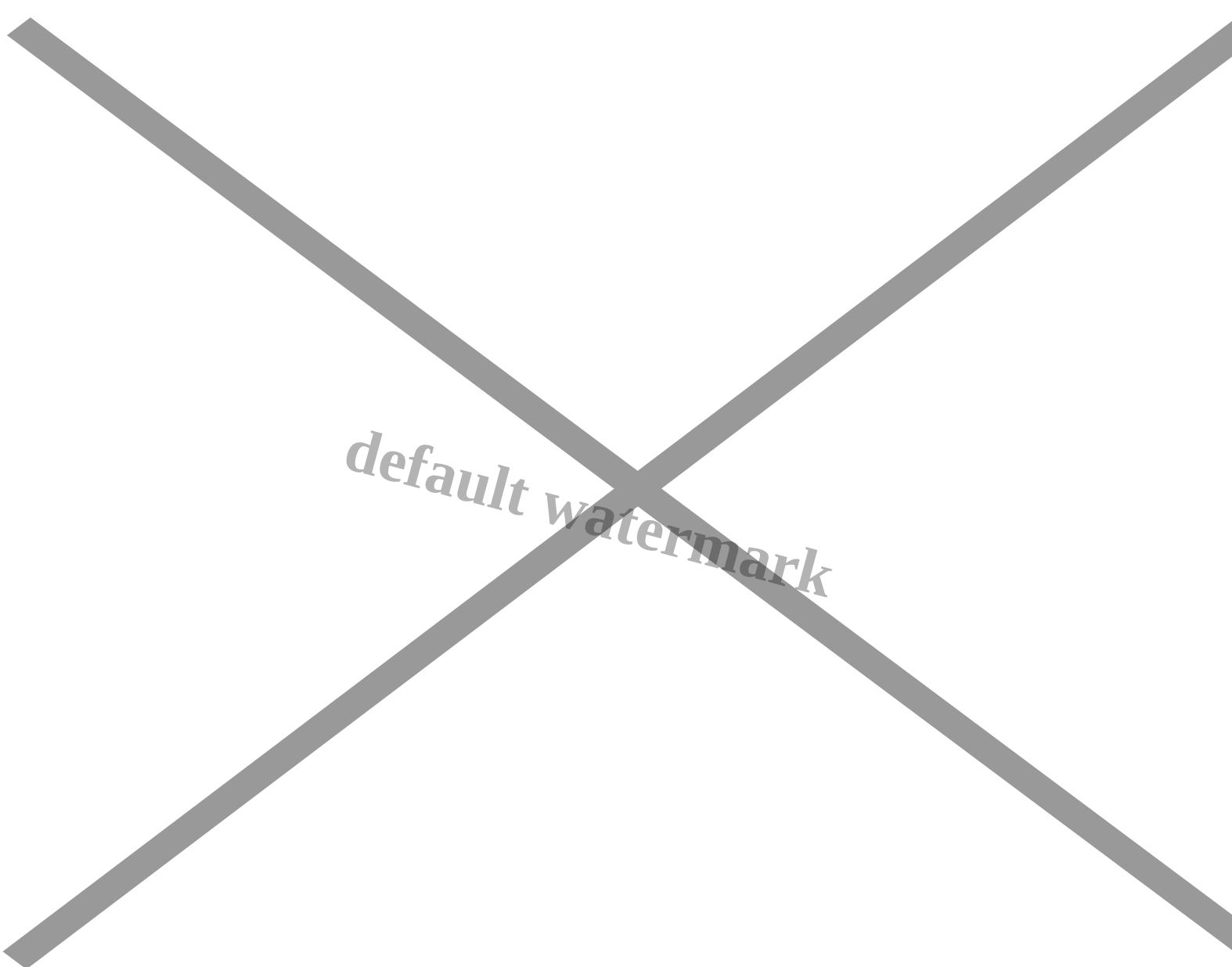
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TLDR: Stop being misled into believing that more DHA = better = worth you paying a higher price for. I used to think so too, but not anymore.

Fun fact: My mother didn't feed me particularly high levels of DHA during my growing-up years, but I still got straight As and a scholarship anyway. So I'm not convinced at all that paying more for more DHA / ARA content will make my son smarter. If it was that easy, then all our kids would be geniuses.

3. Investigating Marketing Claims

Some formula milk brands spend hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to promote and position their product as being the most superior. Take a look:

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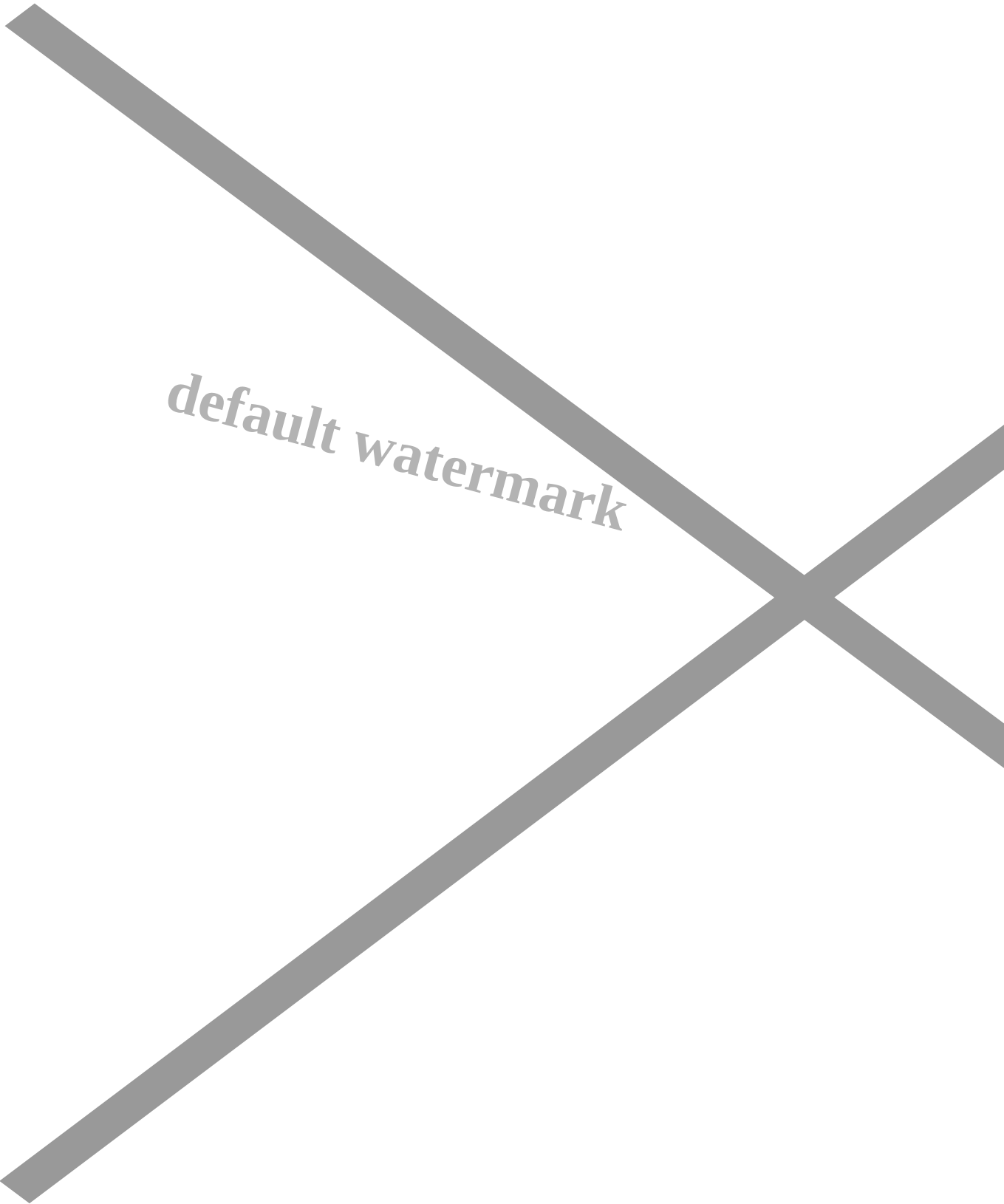
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The research studies quoted by Abbott for their “no palm olein” campaign sampled only [10](#) and [33](#) infants respectively.

Well, Iâ??m not convinced. Hereâ??s why:

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Sidenote 1: Abbott recently engaged Instagram influencer Lian Meiting (who was previously feeding her daughter with Enfamil) to promote their “choose formulas with no palm oil” campaign, and to say that clinical tests of such formulas show more DHA is being absorbed by your little one. I’m not sure if she read up on these tests though, or if she knows that these “tests” were based on a very small sample size that can hardly be representative of the entire infant population, before echoing the statement of choosing a formula with no palm oil?

Sidenote 2: Some mummies use S-26 because the nutritional content is supposedly higher. Well, my research showed that they’ve lower calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, folic acid, vitamin C, nucleotides, and no prebiotics. It also has among the highest fat content, second only to Similac.

How to Choose What’s Best?

While I cannot tell you what’s best, and neither can any scientific study conclusively prove which brand will be best for your baby, you can always do your own comparison to decide.

Compare the ingredients and nutritional levels on an excel spreadsheet, and you’ll find that all of the milk brands here are fortified with the same essential nutrients required for your baby’s growth and development, and the nutritional levels are pretty much on par.

If you believe in DHA and ARA (despite all the scientific studies disputing it), you’ll see that FairPrice Gold has the highest levels while at a much lower price tag than many of the more expensive brands. But hey, fortified DHA has not been proven to do much for your child’s development. You’ll be better off breastfeeding or getting donor milk.

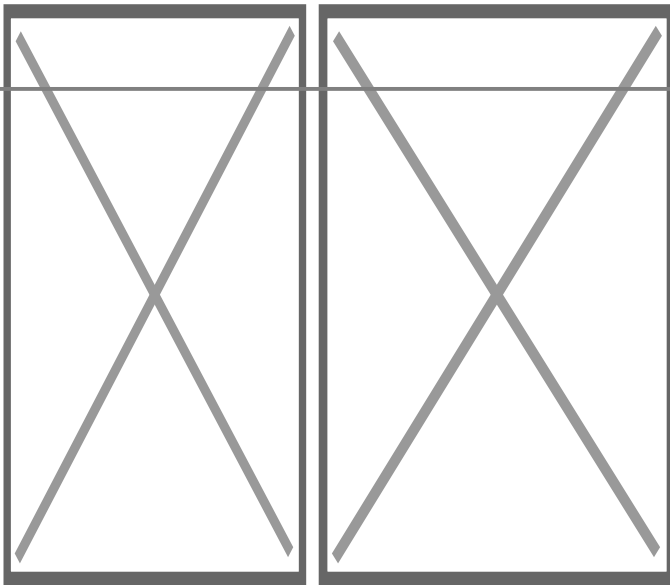
Next, look at the **country of origin**. Milk from Australia and New Zealand generally tastes better (try it for yourself!), and even European countries procure milk from these two countries when their own local produce falls short.

Finally, look at **price** and decide which one gives you the best value for money.

My Conclusion

After weeks of research only to realise that there was pretty much no difference between the different milk brands, I narrowed my choices down to the two most affordable options – Nature One Dairy and FairPrice Gold.

I later found out that Nature One Dairy manufactures FairPrice Gold’s infant milk formula, so that cemented my decision to go for theirs. We decided on **Nature One Dairy (Premium)** as it contains prebiotics, especially given baby Nate’s constipation issues.



I usually buy from Sheng Siong, Redmart Lazada or Shopee.

Switching over from NAN to Nature One Dairy was the best decision we made and it has helped us to save a lot more money. If you're like us (looking for a more affordable option without compromising on the essential ingredients needed for your child's development), I would highly recommend that you review your choice of formula milk again.

With love,
Budget Babe

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*Disclaimer: This is not a recommendation nor medical advice. You should review the differences between the respective formula milk brands and make your own decision as to which will be the best for you, your baby and your wallet. **No company sponsored this review** (although I certainly wish one did, given the amount of research I undertook! Haha) and I compiled the above information by myself while comparing price and quality to decide which brand to switch my baby over to. You should make your own informed decision in providing for your child as to what's best.*

Nutritional content of Stage 2 formula milk:

	\$29.00	\$31.80	\$39.00	\$47.60	\$50.70	\$53.70	\$
airy	Fairprice Gold	Abbott Grow	Einmilk	NAN	Dumex Mamil	S-26	A
	65	72	64	67	68	67	
	2.6	2.24	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	
	3.3	3	3	3	3	3	
	58	60	100	43	40	37	
	15	4.29	3	4.72	10	11.3	
	15	4.29	5.9	0	10	11.3	
	629	520	600	430	462	450	
	5.9	8.9	7.2	8.1	7.7	8.1	
	0.4	-	-	Probiotics	0.8	-	
	7	-	1.8	-	-	2.6	
	4	-	5	0.19	-	4.7	
	2	-	2.1	-	-	-	
	12	-	-	-	-	20	

Nutritional content in infant formula milk

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airy	Fairprice Gold	Abbott Grow	Einmilk	NAN	Dumex Mamil	S-26	A
	316	217	289	256	223	196	
	15	-	-	-	-	21	
	44	55	52	53.2	41	44	
	1.8	2.7	2.5	1.3	1.6	0.77	
	8.3	4	8.2	6.1	5.4	3.4	
	95	70	117	140	51	51	
	171	110	135	170	120	140	
	52	40	85	70	44	40	
	0.4	0.22	0.4	0.19	0.3	0.2	
	586	510	775	560	400	400	
	15	13	15.5	14.6	13	8	
	464	370	573	830	400	350	
	4.9	3	4.2	2.5	1.5	1.3	
	13	8.3	20.3	12	8.4	8.5	
	13	-	19.2	6.94	14	20	
	4	-	-	4.2	2.2	4.5	

Nutritional content in infant formula milk

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Minerals	Nature One Dairy	Fairprice Gold	Abbott Grow	Einm
Calcium (mg)	88	77	81	75
Phosphorus (mg)	55	50	54	42
Magnesium (mg)	8.5	7	7	7.1
Iron (mg)	1.1	0.9	0.96	0.9
Zinc (mg)	0.6	0.5	0.54	0.7
Copper (µg)	53	49	47	65
Manganese (µg)	44	37	31	14
Iodine (µg)	22	17	-	15
Sodium (mg)	27	28	28	31
Potassium (mg)	97	90	87	98
Chloride (mg)	76	65	51	60
Selenium (µg)	3.4	3	2.2	2.1
Fluoride (µg)	-	-	-	-
Polydextrose (g)	-	-	-	-

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