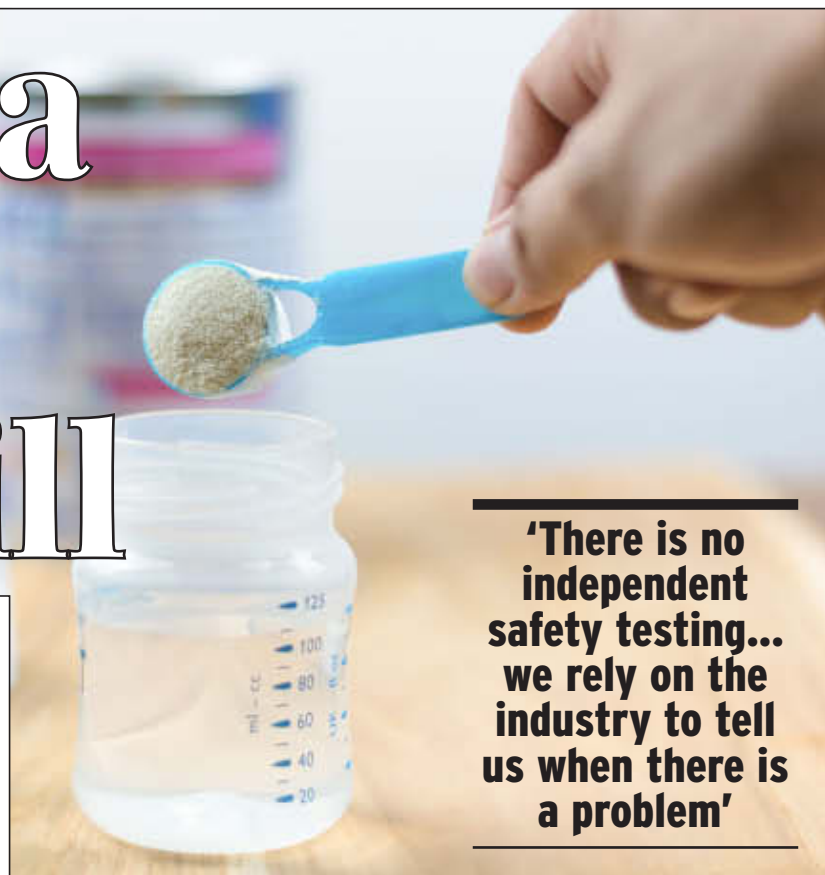


'Toxic' formula warning after 60 babies fall ill



'There is no independent safety testing... we rely on the industry to tell us when there is a problem'

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DOZENS of babies fell ill after being fed contaminated infant formula, it has been revealed – and “hundreds” more may have been affected.

The UK Health Security Agency said parents reported multiple cases of babies becoming sick earlier this year after batches of formula were contaminated with cereulide.

The toxin can trigger vomiting and stomach pain and, in rare cases, can even cause liver or kidney failure.

Child health experts said many more babies than those recorded may have suffered “avoidable sickness”, as contaminated products were on sale for up to eight months before the first recall notice was issued in January.

They claim tots remain at risk without stricter rules on formula safety.

Brands currently “mark their own homework” instead of having products tested for safety independently. Nearly half of six to eight-week-olds in England rely on infant formula.

Multiple lots of infant formula products made by Danone and Nestle including Aptamil, Cow & Gate and SMA were recalled in the UK in January and February in a global contamination alert.

The problem was traced to an ingredient made by a third-party Chinese supplier.

The UKHSA initially said it had 36 reports of illness but now says 61 cases were reported of youngsters with “symptoms consistent with cereulide toxin poisoning”.

Some contaminated batches had been on sale since May 2025.

The industry has said there was no confirmed link between consuming the products and cases of sickness.

Dr Vicky Sibson, director of independent child health charity First Steps Nutrition Trust, said: “Considering products were on shelves for months before parents were warned...potentially hundreds of babies suffered avoidable sickness.

“There is no independent safety testing of infant formula in the UK, so we are relying on the industry to tell us when there is a problem.”

She said authorities should monitor and investigate cases of sickness in

BY ROSIE TAYLOR

babies reported to GPs and hospitals, to spot when illnesses may be triggered by formula contamination.

Dr Simon Cameron, a specialist in microbiology at Queen’s University Belfast, said tighter rules are needed to ensure the “safety and security” of babies who relied on formula.

He added: “Infants are in a uniquely vulnerable position when it comes to food safety. This is not, however, reflected in how the industry is regulated, with companies left to mark their own homework. Incidents like this cereulide contamination make a convincing argument for specific regulations and testing regimes.”

First Steps Nutrition Trust said in a report today that contamination events are becoming more

likely as manufacturers rely on supply chains which are “vulnerable to disruption”. Tim Lang, emeritus professor of food policy at the school of health and medical sciences, City St George’s, University of London, said “inherent risks” in the UK’s food system need to be addressed by government to protect youngsters.

Nestle said: “We acted quickly and decisively with the precautionary recall. We are very sorry to hear about any cases where babies have been poorly. Our teams work closely with any families who report these types of concerns.”

Natasha Bye, chief executive of industry body the British Specialist Nutrition Association, said: “This year, new regulatory standards for cereulide were introduced globally, reflecting ever-improving safety standards. BSNA members are committed to providing quality products that parents can feel confident in.”

Danone North Europe said: “All of our products are manufactured in factories that are independently certified and pass the strictest quality controls, with over 1,000 checkpoints.

“We have recently evolved our procedures to include a triple-check protocol [for cereulide] for all products containing [ingredient] ARA oil, with all tests carried out in an independently accredited laboratory.”



Dr Vicky Sibson