



# Breastfeeding

## How do I start breastfeeding?

### Remember...

- Attachment gets easier with time and practice.
- To avoid any problems, make sure your baby is attached and positioned right.
- Painful feeding shows something might be wrong – talk to a breastfeeding-trained health professional.
- Feed when your baby demands it, as all babies have different feeding requirements.
- Breastmilk is easily digested, so your baby may feed often.
- As your baby grows and sucks more, she or he may have shorter feeds and sleep longer between feeds.

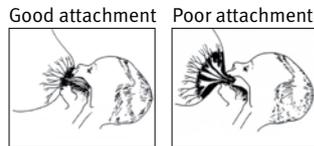
- Relax and make yourself comfortable.
- Allow for skin to skin contact prior to a breastfeed.
- Hold your baby close with their chest against yours.
- When attaching your baby, always bring your baby towards the breast – NOT breast to your baby.
- Baby's mouth should be level with your nipple.
- Gently shape your breast pointing the nipple toward your baby's nose using a 'C' hold with your thumb and index finger.
- Your baby's top lip should be level with your nipple. You can encourage your baby to open his or her mouth wide by teasing the baby's mouth with your nipple. Squeezing a little milk from the breast will encourage this even more. When the baby opens wide, bring him or her quickly to the breast. The chin should be tucked well into the breast, and the baby's mouth should be wide open, with the bottom lip curled back.
- Make sure your nipple and a large amount of the areola (the darker area around the nipple) is inside your baby's mouth.
- Remember to cradle your arm around the baby once he or she is comfortably attached.
- Tuck your baby's body in closer to you to widen the gap a little between his or her nose and your breast.
- After an initial short burst of sucking, the rhythm will be slow and even. Pauses are a normal part of the feed and will become more frequent as the feed continues.
- Attachment gets easier with time.

### How will I know my baby is correctly attached to the breast?

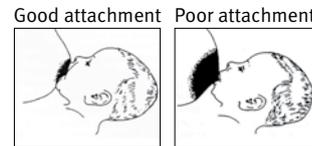
Correct breast attachment and positioning of your baby are vital to avoid problems.

- If the cheeks are being sucked in or you can hear a 'clicking', your baby is not attached properly.
- If it hurts when baby sucks or you suspect poor attachment, put your finger in his or her mouth to break the suction and try again. Just pulling your baby off before suction is broken will hurt.
- Breastfeeding should not be painful. Some women experience nipple sensitivity and tenderness in the first few days.
- Listen and observe your baby during a feed.
- Baby looks comfortable, relaxed and not tense or frowning.
- After feeding, your nipples will appear slightly longer but should not look squashed, flattened, white or ridged.

### Good and poor attachment



### Attachment—outside appearance



Source: World Health Organisation, 'Breastfeeding counselling: A training course', 1993, UNICEF, New York. Reproduced by permission.

### Remember

Painful feeding is an indicator that something may be wrong and you need to seek assistance from the Australian Breastfeeding Association, Australian Lactation Consultants Association or a breastfeeding trained professional.

### About nipple shields

Nipple shields are a short term intervention for cracked, painful, inverted or flat nipples. If you are using a nipple shield on discharge from hospital, seek assistance from a breastfeeding trained professional within a few days of leaving hospital.

### How often should I breastfeed my baby?

- Babies need to feed often. They can have around 8–10 feeds in 24 hours. Mothers and babies vary a lot. How often you feed and how long it takes your baby to feed differs from one mother to the next. With patience, you and your baby will develop your own pattern, which will adapt as your baby grows. Demand feeding allows your baby to let you know what it needs.
- Your baby will know when they are hungry so you can feed to suit your baby's needs. Babies feed more often during their growth spurts.
- Feeding times vary from feed to feed and baby to baby. As babies get older and are able to suck more efficiently, they often have shorter feeds and may sleep longer between feeds.
- It is normal for babies to breastfeed frequently. Breastmilk is the perfect food for babies, it is easily digested and this can mean it empties from your baby's stomach in 90 minutes, so some babies need to feed quite often.
- Let your baby finish the first breast before offering the second breast. At the next feed, reverse the order.
- It is fine to give your baby an extra feed to settle him or her when needed.
- Let your baby feed as long as he or she wants to. Some babies will have a rest at the breast and then start sucking again, so let your baby decide when to come off. As a guide, try to keep your baby's feeds to no longer than one hour.

### Tip

If your baby feeds for longer than one hour on a regular basis, it MAY indicate a feeding problem (eg. incorrect attachment). Access the Australian Breastfeeding Association or other local community child health services for ongoing support.





## Acknowledgements

This fact sheet is consistent with current Infant Feeding Guidelines and Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, as produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

It is also based on information drawn heavily from:

- Infant and Toddler Feeding Guide, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Breastfeeding: A Simple Guide to Help You Establish Breastfeeding, Community Child Health Service, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Growing Strong: Feeding You and Your Baby, Public Health Services, Queensland Health, 2003.
- Optimal Infant Nutrition: Evidence Based Guidelines 2003-2008, Queensland Health, 2003.

This fact sheet is also the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to  
<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

