

Breastfeeding your baby

This information sheet aims to answer commonly asked questions about breastfeeding your baby.

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Talk to your health care provider about your individual circumstances.

Why is breastfeeding important?

Breast milk is a complete food for babies until around six months of age. At around six months, solids can be gradually introduced with continued breastfeeding. Breastfeeding for 12 months or longer is good for you and your baby.

Breastfeeding can be important for bonding between you and your baby. Breast milk helps your baby's brain development and helps to protect your baby from:

- infections such as gastroenteritis, ear and chest infections
- diabetes and obesity
- childhood leukemia
- sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS or cot death)

Breastfeeding may help to protect you from:

- breast cancer
- ovarian cancer
- diabetes
- obesity in the post-menopausal period

When should you feed your baby?

Generally, babies are wide awake for a couple of hours after birth and this is the best time for the first breastfeed. After that, offer a breastfeed whenever your baby shows feeding signs.

When should you avoid breastfeeding?

There are very few medical reasons to stop or avoid breastfeeding. Ask your health care provider about any concerns you have and always check with your health care provider or pharmacist before taking any medication or drugs.

What helps breastfeeding go well?

Although instinctive and natural, breastfeeding like any new skill often requires patience and practice.

Learn about breastfeeding: Get off to a good start by:

- talking to your health care provider at each antenatal visit
- going to antenatal classes and/or reading about breastfeeding
- joining a community or support group for breastfeeding

Skin to skin contact: Holding your baby close on your skin after birth helps your baby:

- stay calm and warm
- search for your breast — licking and nuzzling
- attach with little or no assistance

Recognise when your baby is ready to feed:

Signs include:

- wiggling and stretching
- searching from side to side with mouth open
- putting fingers to mouth
- Crying which is a late sign. You may need to calm your baby before breastfeeding.

Rooming in: Having your baby's cot beside your bed or in your room means you can:

- cuddle your baby whenever you want
- breastfeed when your baby shows feeding signs
- get to know your baby before you go home

Support from family and friends:

- Breastfeeding happens more easily when the people closest to you are supportive and caring
- Talk to family and friends about how they can help you

How do you hold your baby?

There are many ways to breastfeed. The position you choose and find most comfortable may vary from feed to feed.

Whichever position you choose:

- be comfortable with support for your back
- when sitting, lean back to reduce shoulder tension and allow your body to support your baby
- hold your baby close to your body and facing you with his/her head, neck, and back in a straight line
- support your breast with your free hand if you need to help baby attach
- allow baby's cheek or mouth to touch your breast so he/she can "search" for your nipple
- when baby takes the nipple and surrounding area, he/she will start to suck you will see jaw movements



Positions for breastfeeding

How do you know your breastfeeding is going ok?

During the feed:

- you and your baby will be comfortable and relaxed
- breastfeeding should not be painful or cause nipple damage. (Nipple sensitivity and tenderness can be expected)
- your baby's cheeks will look full (not sucked in)
- you will see your baby's jaw move and you may hear little swallowing sounds
- you may feel afterbirth pains, suddenly thirsty and/or a tingling sensation in your breast
- after the feed your nipple may look slightly longer, but should not be flattened, or white or pinched

During the first week:

- babies usually breastfeed 8 or more times a day, including at night
- babies are settled and content after most breastfeeds
- you will hear and see your baby swallowing milk
- baby's poo changes from black meconium (at birth) to greenish-yellow (at around 48 hours). By the end of the first week poo will be yellow, seedy and runny and happen at least 4 times a day
- urine becomes paler in colour and there are 6 or more wet nappies per day
- after the initial weight loss in the first few days, your baby begins to gain weight

Why learn about hand expressing?

Hand expressing breast milk can be useful to:

- express milk on to your nipple to encourage feeding signs if your baby is sleepy
- soften around the nipple to help baby to attach
- remove some milk to make your breasts more comfortable
- have breast milk ready if breastfeeding is not going well or you are away from your baby

Do you need to eat or exercise differently while breastfeeding?

In general:

- eat everyday foods from all five food groups
- increase your daily serves of vegetables, legume and beans, cereals and grains and dairy products
- take an iodine supplement of 150 micrograms daily (check with your health care provider first if you have a thyroid condition)
- daily physical activity is good for your health and can assist in post pregnancy weight loss
- not drinking alcohol is the safest option whilst you are breastfeeding
- it is best to avoid smoking and illicit drugs while you are breastfeeding

What about dummies/pacifiers?

After birth, sucking on the breast tells your body to make milk. If your baby sucks on a dummy/pacifier instead, your body may not get the message to make enough milk. If you want to use a dummy/pacifier, it is best to wait until breastfeeding is established — usually by 4 weeks.

Can you get help after you go home?

Most maternity hospitals offer help with breastfeeding after you go home. Talk to your health care provider about your concerns. They can help you plan what to do before you go home from hospital. This will include how and where to contact supports in the community.

You can also:

- visit your GP, community midwife, a lactation consultant and/or child health nurse
- refer to your baby's personal health record and Child Health Information booklet: Your guide to the first 12 months
- contact community groups such as the Australian Breastfeeding Association

Have your baby checked by a health care provider at five to seven days and again at six weeks of age. This is a good time to talk about breastfeeding.

Support & information

13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the Queensland public. For breastfeeding support and child health advice call 13HEALTH and ask for a child health nurse.

Child Health Service for early feeding support (drop-in clinics) and other services within the Greater Brisbane area www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/community-health/child-health-service/ If outside the Greater Brisbane area, check with your local health facility for local child health services available

Child Health Information: Your guide to the first 12 months. A booklet inserted in the cover pocket of your baby's Personal Health Record

Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline 1800 mum 2 mum 1800 686 268. Community based self-help group offers information, counselling, and support services, on breastfeeding issues. Website: www.breastfeeding.asn.au/

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. Website www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Raising Children Network www.raisingchildren.net.au/ Information and links to videos