

Breastfeeding your baby

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about establishing breastfeeding

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Ask your doctor or midwife about what care is right for you.

Why is breastfeeding important?

Breast milk is a complete food for babies until around six months of age. At this time, solids can be gradually introduced while continuing to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding for 12 months or longer is good for you and your baby.

Breastfeeding can help you and your baby bond. Breast milk helps your baby's brain development and helps to protect your baby from:

- infections such as of the ear, chest, intestines
- diabetes and obesity
- childhood leukaemia
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Breastfeeding may help to protect you from:

- breast and ovarian cancer
- diabetes
- obesity after menopause

When should you feed your baby?

Generally, babies are alert and awake for a few hours after birth, and this is the best time for the first breastfeed. After that, offer a breastfeed whenever your baby shows signs they want to feed. Your midwife can help you to recognise these early feeding signs.

Signs your baby is ready to feed may 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

Learn about breastfeeding

Although instinctive and natural, breastfeeding like any new skill often requires patience and practice. Learn about breastfeeding by:

- talking to your healthcare provider at antenatal visits
- going to antenatal classes and/or reading about it
- joining a breastfeeding community or support group

What helps with 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 by licking and nuzzling
- attach with little or no assistance

Rooming in: having your baby in a cot beside your bed or in your room means you can:

- cuddle your baby whenever you want to
- breastfeed whenever your baby shows feeding signs
- get to know your baby

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 find most comfortable may be different at each 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 their head, neck, and back in a straight line
- support your breast with your free hand if you need to help your baby attach
- allow your baby's cheek or mouth to touch your breast so they can "search" for your nipple
- when your baby sucks, they take the nipple and surrounding area and you will see jaw movements



Image: positions for breastfeeding



How do you know your breastfeeding is going well?

During the feed:

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

During the first week

- babies usually feed 8 or more times over 24 hours
- babies are settled and content after most feeds
- you will hear and see you baby swallowing milk
- urine becomes paler in colour and there are:
 - 1 or more wet nappies in the first 24 hours
 - 2 or more wet nappies from 24–48 hours
 - 3 or more wet nappies from 48–72 hours
 - 4 or more wet nappies from 72–96 hours
- 6 or more wet nappies each day by the end of the first week
- 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
- after initial weight loss in the first few days, your baby begins to gain weight

Why learn about hand expressing?

Hand expressing breastmilk 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
- soften your breasts and make them more comfortable by removing some milk
- have breast milk ready if you are away from your baby or your baby needs extra milk

Do you need to eat or exercise differently?

In general:

- eat everyday foods from all five food groups
- increase your daily serves of vegetables, legumes and beans, cereals, grains and dairy products
- take an iodine supplement of 150 micrograms daily (check with your healthcare 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 substances 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 to 6 weeks.

Can you get help after you go home?

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

You can also:

- visit a community midwife, child health nurse, lactation consultant or your GP
- 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 healthcare 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 432584) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public. <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health>

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling about conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Child Health Service provides newborn drop-in services, early feeding and support, child health clinics. Refer to www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/community-health/child-health-service for your nearest service

Women's Health Queensland Wide 1800 017 676 (free call) offers health promotion, information and education service for women and health professionals throughout Queensland. www.womenshealth.org.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association 1800 686268 (breastfeeding helpline). Community based self-help group offers information, counselling, and support services, on breastfeeding issues <http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au>

Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) provides information on when and how to access a lactation consultant <https://www.lcanz.org/>