

BREASTFEEDING YOUR BABY



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BREASTFEEDING YOUR BABY

The only food your baby needs until six months of age is breast milk. At about six months, you can start to feed your baby iron-rich solid foods while continuing to breastfeed.

You can breastfeed for two years or longer.

BREAST MILK IS GOOD FOR BABIES

- ❑ It is safest and healthiest for babies.
- ❑ It is easy for baby to digest and breastfed babies are less likely to be constipated.
- ❑ Breastfed babies have fewer infections, such as pneumonia, ear infections and diarrhea.
- ❑ They also have less skin problems such as eczema and lower risk of asthma.
- ❑ Breast milk may help prevent diabetes and obesity later in baby's life.
- ❑ Breastfed babies are less likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

BREASTFEEDING IS GOOD FOR MOTHERS

- ❑ It helps mothers bond with their babies.
- ❑ It helps with healing after the baby's birth.
- ❑ It may help mothers return to their pre-pregnancy weight.
- ❑ It decreases a mother's risk of breast cancer, and it may also reduce the risk of ovarian cancer and diabetes.

WHEN SHOULD I START TO BREASTFEED MY BABY?

- ❑ Babies should be breastfed soon after birth – within the first hour if possible.
- ❑ The first milk is called colostrum, and it is perfect for baby.
 - ◆ Colostrum is produced in small amounts which is all baby needs.
 - ◆ It gives your baby important early nutrition and protection from infection.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BREASTFEED MY BABY?

- ❑ Breastfeed when your baby shows signs of hunger.

SIGNS YOUR BABY FEELS HUNGRY:

- ❑ Baby sucks lips, tongue or hands.
- ❑ Baby looks around with an open mouth – this is called ‘rooting’.
- ❑ Crying is a late sign of hunger – try to feed your baby before he or she starts to cry.
- ❑ Let your baby decide when to breastfeed and how long to breastfeed.
- ❑ There are no set times to breastfeed your baby. Most babies will breastfeed at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (day and night).

WHAT ELSE HELPS BREASTFEEDING?

- ❑ Keep your new baby close and provide skin-to-skin contact to promote breastfeeding and bonding.
- ❑ Start each feed with the opposite breast from the last time to help increase your milk supply.
- ❑ Try different positions for breastfeeding to find what works best - your nurse or midwife can show these to you.
- ❑ Have confidence that you can breastfeed and your breast milk will meet your baby's needs.

HOW DO I KNOW MY BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH?

You will know your baby is getting enough breast milk when:

- ❑ You can see and hear sucking and swallowing.
- ❑ By day 4 to 6, your baby has 5 or more wet diapers a day.
- ❑ By day 5, your baby has loose or seedy yellow bowel movements at least 2-3 times a day.
 - ◆ After 4-6 weeks, babies often have fewer bowel movements and this is normal.
- ❑ By 2 weeks, baby is at or above birth weight.
- ❑ Your breasts feel full before feedings and soft after feedings.
 - ◆ It may take a few days to feel this change.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

VITAMIN D

Breastfed babies need a vitamin D supplement of 800 IU each day during the first year to prevent rickets.

GROWTH SPURTS (MORE FREQUENT FEEDS)

Growth spurts are the times your baby grows more quickly and needs more breast milk – baby will feed more frequently to increase your milk supply. These growth spurts occur at about 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months of age.

MEDICATIONS

In many cases it is safe to continue breastfeeding if you need to take prescription or over-the-counter medicine. Speak to the nurse at the health centre or Public Health about the medications you are taking.

ALCOHOL

It is best to avoid drinking while you are breastfeeding as alcohol will go into your breast milk. Speak with the nurse at the health centre or Public Health if you are worried about drinking and breastfeeding.

SMOKING

It is best to cut down on smoking or quit while you are breastfeeding. Even if you smoke, breastfeeding is still best for your baby.

RECREATIONAL DRUGS

It is best to avoid recreational drugs such as marijuana while you are breastfeeding as they will go through to your breast milk.

WHEN SHOULD I GO FOR HELP OR ADVICE?

You should go to see a nurse at the health centre or Public Health anytime you are worried about your baby – **you know your baby best.**

OTHER TIMES TO GO FOR HELP OR ADVICE

FOR YOUR BABY:

- Baby is sleepy and not waking up for feeds.
- You are concerned baby is not feeding well.
- Not enough wet and dirty diapers – see section on **‘How do I know my baby is getting enough?’**
- You notice a pinkish or orange color in baby’s diaper.
- Baby is not interested in feeding and often goes without feeding for 4-5 hours in the first few weeks after birth.
- Baby’s skin and/or eyes appear yellow.

FOR YOURSELF:

- You have pain when breastfeeding.
- Your nipples are sore, cracked or bleeding.
- You have flu-like symptoms or an unexplained fever over 38°C.
- You have increased bleeding or are passing large clots.
- You experience feelings of sadness or tearfulness that won’t go away.

For more information on how to breastfeed your baby you can see a nurse or midwife at the health centre or Public Health.