



BREAST MILK FORTIFIER

The benefits of breast milk for premature babies

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby for the following reasons:

- » it is the most nutritious food for babies
- » it is the most easily digestible food for babies who are born very premature.
- » it helps your baby's immune system fight infections, particularly a serious bowel infection called **necrotising enterocolitis** (NEC).

Why does my baby need added nutrients if they are breastfed?

Very premature babies miss out on some nutrients they would usually receive from their mother via the placenta in the last weeks of pregnancy. These nutrients can be added to your breast milk in a powder form called 'human milk fortifier' (HMF).

Babies who are born before 30 weeks, or weigh less than 1500g at birth, will usually start fortifier when they are getting about half of their daily intake as breast milk.

Nursing staff will mix the fortifier with a specific amount of breast milk so that your baby gets the right amount of nutrition in their feeds.

What extra nutrients are in fortifier?

The added nutrients, that make the most difference to your baby, are protein (for growth), carbohydrates (for energy and growth), and calcium and phosphate (for bone strength). There are also extra salts, minerals, and vitamins.

What is fortifier made from?

The protein in fortifier is hydrolysed (partly digested) and made from cow's milk. Other nutrients are added under strictly-controlled manufacturing processes. There are no fortifiers currently available in Australia that are made from human breast milk.

What benefits does fortifier have?

Babies who receive fortifier grow better than babies who receive breast milk alone. The extra calcium and phosphate in fortifier may help babies' bones become stronger by preventing a condition called 'metabolic bone disease of prematurity'.

Does fortifier have any side effects?

A small number of babies may not digest their feeds completely when fortifier starts, but this is usually temporary.

There is no evidence that using a fortifier causes allergies or cow's milk protein intolerance.

When will my baby stop fortifier?

Fortifier is usually continued until your baby weighs at least two kilograms, although some babies will continue it longer. We will also stop fortifier once your baby is fully breast feeding and is growing well.

If you have any questions, please ask your baby's nurse or doctor.