

Breast milk fortifier

The benefits of breast milk for premature babies

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby because:

- it's the most nutritious food for babies
- it's easy for babies to digest, especially those born very premature
- it helps your baby's immune system fight infections, like the serious bowel infection necrotising enterocolitis (NEC).

Why add nutrients to breast milk?

Babies born very early or underweight might miss out on some nutrients they would usually receive through 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 weighing less than 1800g at birth usually start on fortifier when they're getting about half of their daily milk from breast milk.

Nursing staff mix the fortifier with a measured amount of breast milk, so your baby gets the right amount of nutrients in their feeds.

What extra nutrients are in fortifier?

Fortifier includes extra protein for growth, carbohydrates for energy and growth, and calcium and phosphate for bone strength. It also contains extra salts, minerals, and vitamins.

What is fortifier made from?

Fortifier contains protein from cow's milk. It is highly processed to make it easier for premature babies to digest. Other nutrients are added under carefully controlled manufacturing processes.

The breast milk fortifier used at The Women's is Halal certified.

What are the benefits of fortifier?

Fortifier supports the growth of premature babies, helping them develop just like they would inside the womb. The extra calcium and phosphate help strengthen their bones as they grow.

Are there any side effects?

Some babies may not digest their feeds completely when starting fortifier, but this is usually temporary. There's no evidence that using a fortifier causes allergies to cow's milk protein.

When will your baby stop fortifier?

Usually, fortifier is continued until your baby reaches term age (37 weeks corrected) or is fully breastfeeding and growing well. Some babies might need it for longer because they have ongoing nutritional needs.

For more information

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

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

Support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

1800 737 732 (24-hour support service)

1800respect.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

If you need an interpreter,
you can ask for one.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your or your baby's healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you or your baby require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
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