



HOW TO BREASTFEED

Breastfeeding your baby will provide all the food required until the gradual introduction of family foods at around 6 months. Breastfeeding remains important and is recommended until 2 years and longer, as mother and baby prefer. This fact sheet will give you tips for breastfeeding successfully and explain how to know if your baby is feeding well.

The beauty of breast milk

For baby, breastfeeding:

- provides nutrition for optimum growth and development
- provides protection against a range of infections, such as chest, middle ear or gastrointestinal infections
- reduces risk and severity of allergies, e.g. asthma, eczema
- reduces the risk of diseases in adulthood such as Diabetes Types I and II and childhood cancers such as lymphoma and leukaemia.

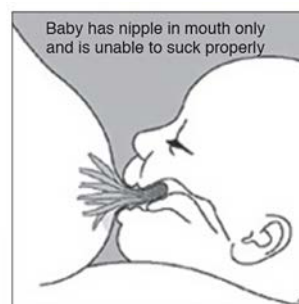
For mothers, breastfeeding may:

- help your uterus to return to normal size after birth
- reduce the risk of some breast and ovarian cancers
- delay fertility if your baby is exclusively breastfed.

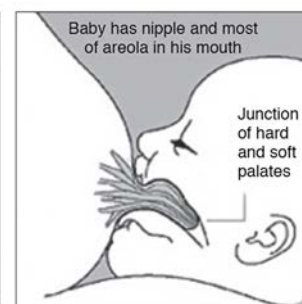
When your baby is born at term, is well, alert and responsive, your midwife will support you to enjoy immediate skin-to-skin contact and continue this for at least an hour after birth. This time may often allow your baby to find your breasts, to attach and feed.

While some babies manage to attach themselves to the breast very capably with little or no assistance the following tips may help with early feeds.

- Make sure you are sitting or lying comfortably and hold your baby close, facing your breast.
- Position your baby sideways or upright with his nose opposite your nipple.
- Support your breast from underneath as needed.
- Position your fingers well back from the areola/nipple so your baby is able to take a big mouthful of breast tissue.
- Touch baby's lips with your nipple to encourage a wide-open mouth.
- When your baby's mouth is very wide, bring him quickly to the breast, chin first so his bottom lip is placed well down 'off centre' to cover a good part of the lower areola.
- Continue to support your breast until you notice a deep rhythmic pattern of sucking and swallowing.
- If you experience pain once your baby has commenced swallowing insert a clean finger between his gums to break the seal and reattach.



Poor attachment



Optimal attachment

How often does baby need to feed?

In the early weeks, most babies need at least 8–10 feeds in 24 hours.

You know your baby is feeding well when:

- he is settled after most feeds
- he is alert, active and content when awake
- you have changed at least six soaked cloth nappies or 3-4 heavy disposable ones in 24 hours
- your baby has at least one loose, yellow bowel motion daily (after the dark green meconium that is seen in the first few days).

Your baby will usually be back to birth weight by two weeks of age. Normal weight gain is between 20 and 30 grams per day (140 - 210 grams per week).

You know your baby is feeding correctly when:

- short frequent sucks to stimulate milk flow are followed by swallowing which you can hear or see. Sucking becomes slower, deeper and more rhythmic with rest periods between each sucking burst. As the feed progresses the sucking bursts become shorter and the rest periods longer

You may develop problems breastfeeding if you:

- restrict suckling time at the breast
- give infant formula inappropriately
- use a dummy in the early weeks.

For more information

Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse

Maternal & Child Health Line

Tel: 13 22 29 (24 hours)

Australian Breastfeeding Association

T: 1800 686 268 - Breastfeeding Helpline

W: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Related fact sheets on the Women's website

W: www.thewomens.org.au

- Mastitis
- Using a breast pump
- Breastfeeding: Getting started