

YOU'RE PREGNANT, SO LET'S TALK ABOUT FEEDING YOUR BABY...



the women's
the royal women's hospital
victoria australia

During your pregnancy we will talk with you about how you plan to feed your baby. Your feeding plans, whatever they are and previous feeding experiences are important. Whether this is your first baby or if you have fed other babies you may have some questions.

The Women's is accredited as a Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) hospital. We work together to help women make informed decisions about feeding their babies. Our Breastfeeding Policy explains our commitment to your care and is available if you wish to see it, just ask your midwife or nurse.

Understanding you and your wishes

It is important for us to know if you:

- have any medical conditions or are taking any medicines
- have had any breast or nipple surgery
- are worried about your breasts or nipples
- had difficulty with breastfeeding in the past
- have plans to feed your baby any formula
- know that your baby might have any medical conditions when they are born.

Your midwife or doctor may recommend that you see one of our lactation consultants during your pregnancy.

If you have plans to feed your baby any formula it is important that we talk about making infant formula safely and how you will use it in hospital and at home.

Important information for all women about breastfeeding

Why breastfeeding is important

- Your breast milk is the perfect food for your baby.
- It helps protect your baby against gastroenteritis and diarrhoea, ear and chest infections, allergies and diabetes.
- It helps reduce your bleeding after birth and returning to your pre-pregnancy weight.
- It reduces your risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and osteoporosis.
- It reduces your fertility after the birth, is convenient and costs nothing.

Mother-friendly labour and birthing practices help with breastfeeding

Having support in labour and feeling comfortable with the people around you can help with breastfeeding. When you come to have your baby, support from someone you know well and feel comfortable with is important, this may be your partner, a family member or a friend. They can help you find a birth position that is comfortable for you and, when possible, assist you to be mobile during your labour.

Skin-to-skin contact after your birth and your baby's first breastfeed

After your baby is born we will help you be in skin-to-skin contact with your baby. Regardless of the way you decide to feed this contact gives warmth and safety and helps them get ready for their first feed.

This first feed helps with getting you and your baby off to a good start so we will make it a priority and we will help you with this feed. If you have a caesarean birth, wherever possible your baby will be with you in the recovery room afterwards.

Understanding your baby's feeding cues

Babies usually feed according to their need, which is about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. Your baby will show you signs that they are ready to feed such as licking, sucking and making soft noises. Feeding to your baby's needs helps you establish and keep your milk supply and make enough breast milk for your baby.

Sometimes if a baby is a little sleepy, premature or unwell, we will encourage you to wake your baby for a feed, but this is only until they can wake themselves for feeds.

Positioning and attaching your baby for feeds

Babies know how to breastfeed and it's good to follow their lead. For mothers that takes time, patience and practice. In the first few days, your breasts produce colostrum (early breast milk); which is all a healthy baby needs. Your breasts will feel soft at this stage before the mature milk 'comes in'. This time allows you an opportunity to practice following your baby's lead and trying feeding positions that are comfortable.

Sharing your room with your baby

Keeping your baby with you is the safest place for your baby and it helps you to recognise the signs that your baby is ready for a feed, is tired or needs a cuddle. At the Women's we will support you to keep your baby in your room with you all the time.

Knowing that your baby is getting enough milk

Mothers have always known ways to check if their baby is getting enough milk – such as having enough wet and dirty nappies. After your breast milk has 'come in' - which is about 2 to 4 days after birth, there starts to be more wet and dirty nappies. You should expect to see 5 to 6 wet nappies and 2 to 3 dirty nappies every 24 hours, and that your baby is alert, responding and gaining weight. The midwives will also check by weighing your baby.

Australian and World Health Organization recommendations about breastfeeding

The recommendations are to breastfeed exclusively (with no other fluids or foods) until around 6 months of age and then to continue to breastfeed as part of your baby's diet until 2 years or beyond. If infant formula is needed your midwife or other health professional will discuss this with you.

Dummies, bottles and other fluids

While you are establishing breastfeeding, using bottles and teats or offering fluids other than breast milk will decrease the time your baby feeds at your breast, which will reduce your breast milk supply. If supplements are required for your baby, staff will be able to advise you about what to give and the best way to do it.

Also using a dummy might not be the best thing in the early days of breastfeeding - your baby might be telling you they need a breastfeed not just a dummy to settle. It is best to wait until you and your baby really know how well feeding is going before using them.

Conflicting breastfeeding advice

Sometimes women feel that they get conflicting advice about feeding their baby from health professionals, family and friends, and from the media. As things change rapidly in the early days of baby's life and in breastfeeding, our advice may need to change from day to day – or even feed to feed. We aim to give you the best available advice at the right time. Family and friends will also offer advice that might be helpful - choose what is working best for you and your baby.

For more information and advice

Having your Baby at the Women's book

Given to you at an early antenatal appointment

Breastfeeding fact sheets on our website

www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets

Growing Together parenting app

Available from the Apple Store and Google

Women's Welcome Centre

Ground floor, near the information desk.

Open 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

T: (03) 8345 3037 or 1800 442 007 (rural callers)

Other contacts

Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse

Victorian Maternal & Child Health Line

T: 13 22 29 (24 hours)

Australian Breastfeeding Association

T: 1800 686 268 - Breastfeeding Helpline

W: www.breastfeeding.asn.au