



Breastfeeding

Getting started

Remember...

- Breastfeed your baby as soon as you can after birth.
- During pregnancy, your body produces baby's first milk, called colostrum.
- As you breastfeed, colostrum decreases and breast milk increases.
- The more you feed, the more milk you will produce.
- To breastfeed successfully:
 - get support
 - find out information
 - eat a healthy diet
 - drink lots of fluids
 - get rest.
- Breastfeeding doesn't always come easily. Contact a breastfeeding trained health professional if you need help.

Here are some commonly asked questions and answers about breastfeeding.

When do I start breastfeeding?

Breastfeed your baby as soon as possible after birth, as most babies are alert and have a strong desire to suck. Making an attempt in the first half-hour is good. Your body will have already produced colostrum (baby's first milk), which is perfect for your newborn baby.

How does my body produce milk?

During pregnancy, your body begins to produce colostrum – a thick, rich, yellowish fluid. As you breastfeed more, the colostrum decreases and your breastmilk increases. Breastmilk is NEVER TOO RICH OR TOO WEAK. It may look pale whitish blue as it changes to suit your baby's needs, but it has all the nourishment necessary.

When your baby starts sucking, you may feel a tingling or tightening sensation in your breasts. This feeling, known as 'let-down', occurs at other times too (eg. when you hear your baby cry). Not all mothers experience this.

Breastmilk production works on supply and demand. The more you feed, the more breastmilk you will produce.

What do I need to help me to breastfeed?

While your body has prepared itself for breastfeeding during pregnancy, there are a number of things you can do which will help, especially in the early months.

- Obtain breastfeeding information during pregnancy.
- Join a breastfeeding support group and talk to other breastfeeding mothers.
- Find out what breastfeeding support is in your area before you leave hospital, eg. child health clinic, lactation consultant, the Australian Breastfeeding Association and post-discharge services that support breastfeeding.

- Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods, in particular vegetables, fruit, wholegrain breads and cereals, and some dairy foods and meats. No specific food has been proven to upset babies or cause 'wind'. Try to keep physically active and eat according to your energy needs.
- Try to sleep or rest when your baby is asleep.
- Accept offers of help with housework and meals from your partner, family and friends. Let them know about the benefits of breastfeeding so they can better support you.
- If you plan to return to work, talk to your employer about working and breastfeeding.
- Do only essential housework.
- Drink plenty of fluids. A good habit is to have a drink of water every time your baby feeds.
- Avoid cigarettes, alcohol, coffee, cola and other drugs. If you find this difficult, talk to your health professional for support and advice about how to minimise the effects these products can have on your baby. These products contain ingredients that pass onto your baby through your breastmilk. If you decide to continue to have these products, have them after a breastfeed rather than before.
- If you need to take medication, ask your doctor to prescribe medication that is safe while breastfeeding.
- Make some time for yourself so that you can relax.
- Take the phone off the hook or put limits on visitors and phone calls (this will leave you time to catch up).
- Get everything ready – eg. drinks and pillows – before you start the feed or at the end of the last feed.
- Your baby may need to feed very frequently in the first weeks of life. As they grow, they will go for longer between feeds (feeding frequency will increase again during growth spurts).

What should I eat?

Pregnancy and breastfeeding are some of the most nutritionally demanding times for your body, so it's really important to eat healthy foods to make sure both you and your baby are as healthy as possible. This will make it easier to cope with looking after your baby. Eat a variety of foods from each of these groups every day:

- bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles
- vegetables, legumes (eg. lentils, kidney beans)
- fruit
- meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes
- milk, yoghurt, cheese.

If you are following a special diet or a vegetarian diet, you may need extra advice from a dietitian/nutritionist.

Breastfed babies do not usually need water between feeds.

Breastfeeding mothers need to drink plenty of fluids, especially in warm weather. Water is the best drink.



How do I help get milk flow started?

There are some things you can do to help your breastmilk come down.

- Gently massage the breast towards the nipple.
- Roll the nipple between the thumb and fingers before starting the feed.
- Have a warm shower or put a clean, warm washer on the breast.
- Express a small amount of breastmilk just before a feed.
- Do what you can to relax – breathe deeply, lower your shoulders, get someone to give you a back rub and try to enjoy this special time with your baby.

Breastfeeding is a learned skill that doesn't always come easily. Many women experience some difficulties, particularly in the early days. If you have any concerns, are experiencing any difficulties or need reassurance, contact a health professional. Addressing issues early will make breastfeeding a more enjoyable experience for you and help you to keep breastfeeding for longer.

For more information or assistance

In hospital

Talk to a midwife or lactation consultant about any concerns you have.

At home

Talk to your local child health nurse, a lactation consultant, an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor or your general practitioner.

Telephone

- Your local child health nurse (see Queensland Health, Community Child Health service in the White Pages)
- 13 HEALTH (including 24-hour child health information and advice) 13 43 25 84
- Australian Breastfeeding Association 24-hour / 7-day free Breastfeeding helpline, call from anywhere in the state on 1800-mum-2-mum (1800 686 2 686)
- The Queensland branch of the Australian Breastfeeding Association can be contacted by calling (07) 3324 0577 or emailing abaqld@powerup.com.au.

Websites

- Australian Breastfeeding Association www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- Australian Lactation Consultations Association www.alca.asn.au

Acknowledgements

This fact sheet is consistent with current Infant Feeding Guidelines and Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, as produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

It is also based on information drawn heavily from:

- Infant and Toddler Feeding Guide, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.

- Breastfeeding: A Simple Guide to Help You Establish Breastfeeding, Community Child Health Service, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Growing Strong: Feeding You and Your Baby, Public Health Services, Queensland Health, 2003.
- Optimal Infant Nutrition: Evidence Based Guidelines 2003-2008, Queensland Health, 2003.

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To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.