

Breastfeeding Your Baby

Congratulations on your new baby! This handout provides information about breastfeeding healthy full term infants. If your baby was born early, you will need to follow the specific feeding advice provided by your health care provider. You can find more information about breastfeeding in the *Breastfeeding Handbook* available from your health care provider.

Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed your baby. Breastfeeding gives your baby the best possible food to start his or her life. Breast milk is easy to digest, always the perfect temperature and meets your baby's nutritional needs. Breastfeeding helps your baby become and stay healthy. Breastfeeding also teaches babies to eat when they are hungry and to stop eating when they are satisfied. Breastfeeding is the first step in lifelong healthy eating habits.



Babies who are **not** breastfed have more risk of developing certain infections and diseases than babies who are breastfed. Breastfeeding is also of benefit to babies who have a family history of allergies.

You will probably have many questions about breastfeeding. Here are some questions which parents and caregivers often ask:

How often should I breastfeed my baby?

Each baby's appetite is different. You should breastfeed whenever your baby is hungry. Most babies feed every two to three hours during the first few months. Sometimes, babies feed more frequently at different times of the day, called "cluster feeding". Most babies feed 8 to 12 times in a 24-hour period, including night feeds. Your baby may feed more during hot weather or growth spurts. Let your baby's appetite be your guide!

How long should my baby breastfeed each time?

Every baby is different. Let your baby guide you! Your baby should feed until he or she is satisfied. Let your baby feed fully on one breast before switching to the other breast. Your baby will come off the breast on his or her own when satisfied.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough breast milk?

You can't measure how much breast milk your baby is getting. But, you can tell if your baby is getting enough breast milk.

Here are some ways to tell:

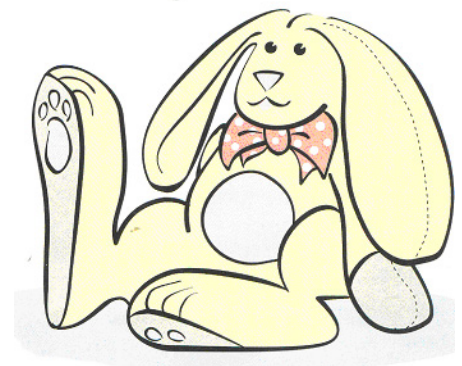
- Your baby is bright and alert.
- Your baby seems satisfied.
- Your baby has at least six wet diapers a day (after he or she is a week old).
- Your baby is growing and developing.
- Your baby is having normal and regular bowel movements. Refer to the *Breastfeeding Handbook* for details.

How much weight should my baby gain?

Each baby gains weight at his or her own rate. Most breastfed babies do not gain the same amount of weight each week. Talk to your health care provider about how much weight your baby should gain.

Growth Spurts

Is your baby feeding more than usual? If so, your baby is probably going through a growth spurt. These growth spurts can happen at any time. Babies' growth spurts usually occur at around 2 weeks, between 4-6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months. During a growth spurt your baby needs extra breast milk. Don't worry! Your body will make what your baby needs.



Does my baby need to take vitamins?

Babies who are breastfed need a daily supplement of 400 IU of vitamin D until one year of age or until breastfeeding is stopped. Babies who are breastfed after one year of age need a daily supplement of 200 IU of vitamin D, unless they are obtaining that amount of vitamin D from food. Additional information about food sources of vitamin D is provided in *Feeding Your Baby: 6 to 12 Months*.

Vitamin D is important for proper growth and development of a baby's bones. Vitamin D may also help to protect babies from developing certain diseases.

You can buy vitamin D drops at drug stores or at stores which have a pharmacy.

The vitamin D drops should be placed directly in the baby's mouth.

Your baby does not need any other vitamins. Vitamins should only be given to a baby if prescribed by a physician for special needs.



Does my baby need fluoride drops?

The use of fluoride drops is not recommended for babies less than six months of age. Some babies may need fluoride drops after six months of age. Fluoride drops should only be given to a baby upon the advice of a dental care giver.

How long can I continue to breastfeed my baby?

You can breastfeed your baby for as long as you wish. Babies should be given only breast milk for the first six months of life. Breastfeeding may continue for up to two years of age and beyond with the addition of healthy solid food at six months of age.

When should I give my baby solid food?

You should give your baby only breast milk for the first six months of life. New research shows that breast milk is all babies need for the first six months. Giving your baby solid foods too early can cause problems because:



- Your baby may not drink enough breast milk.
- Your baby's system is not ready to digest solid food.
- Your baby's risk of being anemic (low iron) increases.
- Your baby's risk of developing eczema (skin disorder) increases.
- Your baby's risk of developing allergies increases.
- Your baby may choke if he or she is not ready to swallow solid foods.

Studies show that giving babies solid foods will not help them sleep through the night.

Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions. For more information about introducing solid foods, please refer to *Feeding Your Baby: 6 to 12 Months*.

Looking for More Information?

For more information about breastfeeding please refer to the *Breastfeeding Handbook*. Support and information is also available from public health nurses, dietitians, lactation consultants and other health care providers. Some public health nurses, Healthy Baby Clubs and Family Resource Centers offer information sessions about caring for babies. You can also check out the following websites:

Health Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca

The Canadian Health Network canadian-health-network.ca

Our thanks to Manitoba Health for permission to use original illustrations and adapt content in developing this resource. Thank you to the parents, caregivers and health care providers who provided insight and guidance in the development of this handout.