

# Breastfeeding

**Breastfeeding offers tremendous health benefits to both mother and child. It is specially designed to cater for all your child's nutritional needs in the first six months of life.**

Scientific research has shown that the benefits of breastfeeding your baby include:

- Superior nutrition
- Increased resistance to infections, leading to fewer incidents of illness and hospitalisation
- Decreased risk of allergies and lactose intolerance
- Less nappy rash and thrush
- Fewer stomach upsets and constipation
- Fewer cavities in infants
- Proper development of your baby's jaw and teeth
- Higher IQ in infants due to good brain development early in life
- Emotional connection and mother-baby bonding
- Decreased risk of malnutrition, obesity and heart disease compared to formula fed babies.

**Breastfeeding also benefits you:**

- The baby's sucking causes a mother's uterus to contract and reduces the flow of blood after delivery
- Mothers who breastfeed tend to lose weight and achieve their pre-pregnancy figure more easily than mothers who bottle feed
- Mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop breast cancer later in life
- Breastfeeding is more economical than formula feeding
- There are less trips to the doctor and less money spent on medications
- Breastfeeding promotes mother-baby bonding.

## Colostrum

For the first one to three days of your baby's life your breast will secrete colostrum, a fluid that can vary in colour from clear, white to yellow. Colostrum is rich in secretory immune properties and proteins. These valuable proteins are essential to the development of a healthy immune system.

The protein in colostrum is easily digested and absorbed by the body, especially by the rapidly developing brain. Colostrum also includes ingredients that promote maturation of the gut and good digestion.

Colostrum is the most superior and well-designed nutrition for your baby in the first few days of life.



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## Latching baby correctly

How your baby takes the breast (latches on) can affect how well they get milk and whether or not you will have nipple pain. When latching babies in any position, the following basic principles should always apply:

- Avoid placing your baby down in a feeding position until you are completely ready to latch
  - the longer your baby waits while you get ready (undoing your bra, etc.) the more frustrated baby gets and the less open baby's mouth will be.
- If latching in a cross-cradle or football position, place the webbed area between the index finger and thumb at the base of your baby's head. Place the other three fingers on the baby's back across the shoulder blades for support. Do not place your hands on the back of the baby's head.
- If latching in cross-cradle, tuck your baby's bottom tightly against your body with your elbow. Your baby's head should be tilted back slightly so the nose is up and the chin is away from his/her chest.
- Align your baby's upper lip to the nipple. To do this, move the baby and not the breast. The nipple should not be aligned with your baby's chin or between your baby's lips.
- When your baby's mouth is open wide, bring the baby onto the breast by pushing between its shoulder blades with your wrist and forearm. Your baby's chin should press into the breast, while the nose never touches the breast (more of the areola will be covered by baby's bottom lip than the top lip)
- If your baby is having a hard time latching, or hesitating, move its mouth away slightly and then run your nipple along the baby's upper lip, from one corner to the other until your baby opens wide.
- When latching you can support or shape the breast with your free hand. Be sure not to lift or move the breast towards the baby's mouth – move the baby toward your breast instead.
- Hold your baby close to you while breastfeeding
  - keep firm pressure between your baby's shoulder blades.

You may need assistance getting started with breast feeding. Our trained and experienced midwives and lactation specialists are here to help you.

## Breastfeeding at home

### How do I know if my baby is getting enough breastmilk?

The following signs indicate that your baby is getting enough milk:

- At least six to eight very wet cloth nappies or at least five very wet disposable nappies in 24 hours
- The urine is odorless and clear/very pale in color
- A very young baby may have two to three bowel movements every day, however this may vary occasionally, and babies have been known to have bowel movements every two to three days.
- Good skin color and muscle tone. Does your baby look like it fits his/her skin? If you gently 'pinch' its skin, it should spring back into place
- Your baby is alert and reasonably contented and does not want to feed constantly. It is however normal for babies to have times when they feed more frequently.

## Expressing milk

Some mothers choose to express and store additional breast milk for use at a later time. Breast milk is usually expressed using a manual or electric breast pump. A breast pump is available in your room, please ask our midwives or lactation consultant to show you how to use it.

## Storage of expressed milk

If expressed freshly, breastmilk may be stored for the following periods:

- At room temperature (below 26 degrees Celsius) for six to eight hours
- In the fridge (at the back) no more than 72 hours
- In the freezer half of a fridge-freezer (separate sections) for 3 months
- In a deep chest freezer for 6-12 months at -20 degrees Celsius



## How do I thaw frozen breastmilk?

Warm the milk by running warm water over the bag or bottle of milk and use it within the next 24 hours. If you need it immediately, remove it from the freezer and run warm water over it until it's at room temperature. Once you've thawed breast milk, don't refreeze it.

Never thaw or heat breastmilk in the microwave.

Storing milk will produce a separation in the liquid. This is normal. A gentle swirl will give it an homogeneous look once more (never vigorously shake breastmilk).

## Care and hygiene of a breast pump

Once you have finished using the breast pump, dismantle the kit so all parts are separate. Rinse them with cold water to remove any breastmilk, and then wash all parts in warm water and dishwashing liquid. Be sure to clean inside and squirt water through any holes.

Rinse well in warm water to remove detergent. Place expressing kit on a clean disposable towel or cleaned surface. Cover with another clean towel while allowing to air dry or dry with a paper towel.

## Nipple shields

Nipple shields are flexible artificial nipples put over the mother's nipple and areola. The shields are a temporary solution to help you and your baby to breastfeed easily; you will need to have your 'milk in' to be able to use this effectively.

Nipple shields are made of silicone and come in various diameters and sizes. They are generally used when:

- Your baby will not take the breast
- You have sore nipples
- Your baby is born prematurely and needs to "learn how to suck"
- Inverted nipples.

## Difficulties using a nipple shield

Nipple shields may prevent your breast from draining properly, increasing the risk of breast infection. A lack of direct stimulation to the breast may also lower your breastmilk supply.

Sometimes babies prefer the nipple shield and battle to transition to the breast directly. Please ask our midwives or lactation consultant for help in applying a nipple shield, or if you have any other concerns.

## Increasing milk supply

More frequent feeding means more milk. To increase supply as your baby grows, feed your baby more often than usual. Always check that your baby is well positioned at the breast, and allow the baby to decide the length of a feed.

## Natural Remedies to increase milk supply\*

The following Natural Remedies may help with increasing your milk supply:

- Fenugreek
- Blessed Thistle.

Other herbal treatments that have been used to increase milk supply include:

- Alfalfa
- Fennel seed
- Red raspberry leaf
- Stinging nettle
- Goats Rue.

Foods that may help increase milk supply, include:

- Oatmeal
- Garlic (in moderation)
- Ginger (in moderation).

\* The Natural Remedies listed above are thought to help milk supply. None of these herbal or food treatments, including Blessed thistle and Fenugreek, has been proven effective scientifically. For further information about medication to increase milk supply, speak to your doctor.

\* **Important note:** Goats Rue and Fenugreek should **not** be used if you are allergic to nuts, soya beans or alfalfa.