

# Feeding your baby

Answers to the  
most frequently  
asked questions  
about feeding  
your baby.

[www.yourbump.nhs.uk](http://www.yourbump.nhs.uk)



#### Partners

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust  
Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust  
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust  
South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust



You'll find many of the frequently asked questions and answers in this leaflet, which we hope you will find helpful as you think about your feeding journey.

**Healthcare professionals involved in your care will help you explore your thoughts and feelings about feeding, so that when your baby is in your arms, skin to skin, you can make an informed decision.**

**Take a look on your Maternity Notes App for more information about the benefits of breastfeeding for you and your baby.**

### **When do I need to decide how to feed my baby?**

Healthcare professionals recommend that you wait until your baby is here before making a decision on how to feed. Many women have shared that their feelings about feeding changed once their baby arrived.

### **What support is available for first time mothers to support feeding?**

All staff are trained to support you with feeding your baby, however you choose to feed. Additional specialist breastfeeding supporters are also available to help you Monday to Friday, should you require their support. Support is available in the hospital and in the community.

### **Does the hospital supply formula if I need it?**

If you choose to formula feed your baby from birth, you will need to bring in a starter pack (including teats) as the hospital does not provide this.\*

However, the hospital will provide what you need if your breastfeeding baby requires supplementation for medical reasons. Staff will discuss the reasons for supplementation with you and support to build and protect your breast milk supply.

If you would like to breastfeed, even if only at the beginning, there is no need to bring formula milk into hospital. Staff will support you to start your breastfeeding journey and help you to express your own milk if baby needs it.

\*If you choose to formula feed your baby ask your midwife or other healthcare professional about paced responsive bottle feeding, also called baby-led bottle feeding. We'd also encourage you to plan to feed your baby in a skin to skin position as much as possible.





## Why should I breastfeed?

Breastfeeding is about a relationship between you and your baby. Breastfeeding is more than just food for your baby, it helps you bond with your baby and respond to their needs for comfort, love and nutrition whilst also supporting your baby's brain development. This is a continuation of the bond you and your baby have already developed throughout your pregnancy.

Breast milk is about protection, it constantly changes to your baby's needs and is unique to you and your baby. This improves both your baby's and your health outcomes for life.

Breast milk provides the best possible nutrition as it is human milk, not based on cow's milk like formula. It provides all the nutrients a baby needs at each stage and can be readily absorbed, promoting optimal growth and development of your baby.

## What are the health benefits of breastfeeding compared to formula feeding?

Breastfeeding helps baby's mouth development, which in turn helps with speech and protects from ear infections. More importantly, it helps with brain development.

Because breast milk is made by humans for humans, there is no comparison with formula. Formula is processed from cow's milk to make it suitable for a human baby, and may also

contain soya protein, structured vegetable oils, antioxidants and fish oils. Formula has to have adequate nutrients but is not so easily absorbed and contains none of the personalised protection found in breast milk. Some of the components of your breast milk cannot be artificially made.

Breastfeeding protects baby from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), obesity and diabetes along with many other illnesses. A breastfeeding mother is less likely to get breast or ovarian cancer, osteoporosis.

## How soon after breastfeeding can I wean my child off?

The longer you breastfeed, or your baby has breast milk, the greater the health benefits for you both. The recommendation is nothing but breast milk for the first 6 months, then continued breastfeeding as solid food is introduced, sustained into the second year, ideally to 2 years or beyond.

## How do I know baby is getting enough milk?

Look for swallowing as baby feeds and check baby's nappies for wees and poos. Your midwife or health visitor will monitor your baby's weight as well.



### How often is baby likely to feed?

It is normal for babies to feed around 10 times or more per 24 hours. Remember that babies feed for comfort as well as milk, and at times you might want your baby to feed for your convenience or because your breasts feel full. You can't over feed your breastfed baby or spoil your baby with love and cuddles. Breastfeeding is a two way process.

### I have heard about hand expressing during the pregnancy - what's that all about?

It can be helpful to start practicing hand expressing over the last few weeks of your pregnancy. Ask your midwife to show you how.

### What's the best way to get started with breastfeeding?

It's recommended that all babies are cuddled skin to skin after the birth in order to help them adjust to the outside world. Skin to skin contact is also the best way to begin your breastfeeding journey. You may be surprised to hear that babies are programmed to find their way to the breast, latch

on and feed and, during skin to skin, will get themselves on with no help at all. In addition, the hand expressing you started before birth comes in useful if, for any reason, your baby is a bit sleepy and you need to give baby your hand expressed colostrum. A healthcare professional will be on hand to help you.

### What is colostrum?

Colostrum is the first 'milk' that's in your breasts from about 20 weeks. It is a sticky, yellowish, concentrated fluid which is packed full of protective factors and will kick start baby's immune system. Colostrum is all your baby needs in the first few days. Whilst all mothers produce colostrum, not all mothers will see it. Please do not worry, this does not relate to the amount of milk you will make for your baby. Colostrum changes to milk a few days after the birth.

**Your midwife or another healthcare professional will be happy to help you with any other questions you might have. We're here for you and your baby.**