

# Why is Breastfeeding Important?

Health Canada and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend **exclusive breastfeeding from birth to six months**. This means that a baby receives only breastmilk until solid foods are introduced at 6 months, with continued breastfeeding for 2 years or beyond.

**Any amount of breastmilk provides many benefits for you and your baby.**

The more breastmilk your baby gets and the longer you breastfeed, the greater the health benefits are for you both.



**Not breastfeeding increases YOUR BABY'S risk of:**

- Asthma
- Severe diarrhea
- Ear infection
- Lung infection
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Obesity and diabetes
- Childhood leukemia

**Not breastfeeding increases YOUR risk of:**

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure and heart disease
- Postpartum hemorrhage
- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer

**Things to consider when making an informed decision about feeding your baby:**

- **Breastmilk is designed for human babies.** Your body produces milk that's specially designed to meet your baby's needs.
- **Any amount of breastmilk is beneficial** - it does not have to be all or nothing!
- **Breastmilk and formula are not the same.** Formula gives your baby the nutrients they need to grow, but it doesn't provide the same immune support or health benefits as breastmilk.
- **Using formula can have risks.** It can affect breastfeeding, change your baby's gut health, and increase their risk for allergies.
- **Breastfeeding has other benefits.** It's always available, environmentally friendly, not impacted by shortages or recalls, and is less expensive than buying formula.
- **Returning to exclusive breastfeeding after using formula can be challenging** if your breastmilk supply was not well-established or protected in the first few weeks.



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# Why Does My Baby Love Skin-to-Skin?

Skin-to-skin care is when your baby is laying on your bare chest, with no clothing or blankets between the two of you (your baby can be in a diaper).

## Being skin-to-skin helps YOUR BABY:

- Build their immune system
- Regulate their body temperature
- Stabilize their blood sugar
- Stabilize their heart rate and breathing
- Reduce feelings of stress and pain

## Being skin-to-skin helps YOU:

- Bond with your baby
- Recover from birth physically and mentally
- Learn your baby's hunger cues
- Build your milk supply

Because of all these benefits, continue to practice skin-to-skin often in the first few weeks and months of your baby's life.

## Safe skin-to-skin contact

*Sit in a laid-back position, alert and not sleepy.*

### **Place your baby with their:**

- Shoulders, chest and tummy facing you
- Head turned to one side with a straight neck
- Head tilted up (in a “sniffing” position)
- Face visible and their nose and mouth not covered
- Arms and legs flexed (in a frog position)

**Note:** If you feel like you may fall asleep, place baby skin-to-skin with someone who is alert or lay your baby in a safe place.



If you can't do skin-to-skin right after birth, that's okay. You can still enjoy all the benefits once it's safe for you and your baby. In the meantime, your partner or support person can hold your baby skin-to-skin—it's the next best thing!



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# How do I Latch My Baby?

## Why is a deep latch important?

- Prevents sore nipples
- Allows your baby to transfer milk
- Increases your milk supply

## Before latching your baby:

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin
- Feed them based on their hunger cues
- Get in a comfortable position with your back supported

## Tips for latching:

- **Hold your baby close, skin-to-skin**, and tuck their bum in.
- **Bring your baby to your breast**, reclining slightly can help.
- **Your baby's tummy should be facing you** with their ear, shoulder and hip in a straight line.
- **Support your baby's neck** by placing your hand behind their shoulders and avoid holding the back of their head.
- **Nipple to nose and chin touching breast.** As your baby's nose touches the nipple, watch for their wide-open mouth.
- **Get a deep latch**, once your baby's mouth opens wide, pull them close and allow them to get a big mouthful of your breast.
- **Your baby's head should be tipped back** with their chin pressed into your breast and their nose clear for breathing.



Breastfeeding should not be painful. Pain is usually a sign of a shallow latch or poor positioning.

If breastfeeding is painful, use a clean finger to break the seal and try latching your baby again.

**Get support if breastfeeding continues to be painful.**



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# When Should I Feed my Baby?

In the first days and weeks, your baby's tummy is small, so they need to feed often—**at least 8 times in 24 hours**. Frequent feeding gives your baby the milk they need and builds your milk supply.

**Watch your baby, not the clock.** Feed your baby based on their hunger cues, for as long and as often as they want. You cannot overfeed a breastfed baby.

Early cues: "I'm hungry" (stirring, mouth opening, turning head and seeking/rooting).

## Early cues – "I'm hungry"



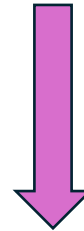
Stirring



Mouth opening



Turning head  
Seeking/rooting



Try to feed your baby when they are showing these early hunger cues.

It is easier to learn a new skill when you are both calm.

Mid-cues: "I'm really hungry" (stretching, increasing physical movement, hand to mouth).

## Mid cues – "I'm really hungry"



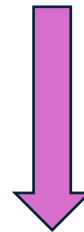
Stretching



Increasing  
physical movement



Hand to mouth



Feed your baby from one breast until they finish feeding (they may come off or fall asleep). You can then offer the other breast.

Try to alternate which breast you start with at each feed.

Late cues: "Calm me, then feed me" (crying, agitated body movements, colour turning red).

## Late cues – "Calm me, then feed me"



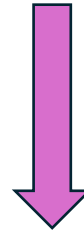
Crying



Agitated body  
movements



Colour turning red



If your baby is showing these late hunger cues, calm them before trying to feed them.

Image: Queensland Government. (2020). Breastfeeding: Signs of hunger. Retrieved from: [Signs of hunger | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.qld.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/signs-of-hunger)

# Is My Baby Getting Enough Milk?

At birth, your baby's tummy is very small, about the size of a cherry! That's why they only need a few drops of early milk, called colostrum, at a time.

## Colostrum:

- Is packed with nutrients and antibodies
- Coats your baby's gut and protects them from infections
- Allows your baby to safely practice suck, swallow and breathe patterns before your higher volume of milk comes in



**Every drop counts! Feeding your baby early and often will tell your body to produce more milk to meet your baby's needs as they grow.**

When you are breastfeeding, you cannot see how much milk your baby is taking. Watch for the signs below that feeding is going well.

**Feed your baby at least 8 times in 24 hours. Your baby should have a strong suck and swallow often.**

Your Baby's Age	1 WEEK							2 WEEKS	3 WEEKS
	1 DAY	2 DAYS	3 DAYS	4 DAYS	5 DAYS	6 DAYS	7 DAYS		
<b>How Often Should You Breastfeed?</b> Per day, on average over 24 hours	<p>At least 8 feeds per day. Your baby is sucking strongly, slowly, steadily and swallowing often.</p>								
<b>Your Baby's Tummy Size</b>	 Size of a cherry		 Size of a walnut		 Size of an apricot		 Size of an egg		
<b>Wet Diapers: How Many, How Wet</b> Per day, on average over 24 hours	 At least 1 WET	 At least 2 WET	 At least 3 WET	 At least 4 WET	 At least 6 HEAVY WET WITH PALE YELLOW OR CLEAR URINE				
<b>Soiled Diapers: Number and Colour of Stools</b> Per day, on average over 24 hours	 At least 1 to 2 BLACK OR DARK GREEN		 At least 3 BROWN, GREEN, OR YELLOW		 At least 3 large, soft and seedy YELLOW				
<b>Your Baby's Weight</b>	Most babies lose a bit of weight in the first 3 days after birth.			From day 4 onward, most babies gain weight regularly.					
<b>Other Signs</b>	Your baby should have a strong cry, move actively and wake easily. Your breasts feel softer and less full after breastfeeding.								

Best Start. (2020). Signs that feeding is going well. Retrieved from: [B02-E\\_BF\\_magnet\\_2020 \(beststart.org\)](https://www.beststart.org/B02-E_BF_magnet_2020)



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# How can I Protect Breastfeeding if Extra Milk is Needed?

A supplement is any nutrition that your baby receives other than directly feeding at the breast. This may be expressed breastmilk or formula.

**There are things you can do to protect breastfeeding while supplementing.**

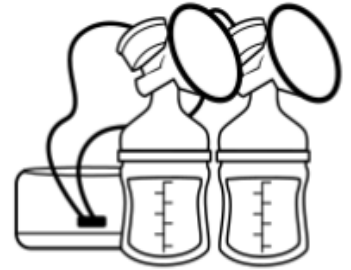


## Step 1: Feed your baby

- Practice **skin-to-skin** and watch your baby for **early hunger cues**.
- **Offer the breast first**, before supplementing. Keep practicing!
- **Your milk is always the best option**. Feed any expressed breastmilk before offering formula (do not mix them in the same container).
- **Consider using a cup, spoon, or lactation aid** to feed your baby until they are latching well at the breast. Feeding from a bottle requires different tongue and jaw movements than breastfeeding, and the milk flows at a faster rate.

## Step 2: Move your milk

- **Anytime your baby receives a supplement, hand express or use a double electric pump to express your milk**. Even if little or no milk comes out, this stimulation tells your body to make more milk.
- **Ensure good breast stimulation and milk removal takes place at least 8 times in 24 hours**.



## Step 3: Get support early

If your baby is having trouble feeding at the breast, and/or you are supplementing with the goal of continued breastfeeding, a [Lactation Consultant](#) can help you to:

- Address any feeding concerns or underlying issues
- Develop an individual plan to reduce or stop supplementation
- Protect breastfeeding and your breastmilk supply

Continue with steps 1 and 2 while waiting for support.



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# How do I Hand Express Breastmilk?

**Hand expression allows you to express breastmilk anytime and anywhere.**

Your baby is the best at removing milk from your breast. However, if you need to express milk in the early days, hand expression is more efficient at removing colostrum (the early breastmilk) than a pump.

## Hand expression is helpful if:

- You and your baby are separated
- Your baby is having difficulty feeding or latching onto the breast
- You want to increase your milk supply
- You are engorged (your breasts are very full)
- You want to express and store breastmilk for later use
- You want to increase your confidence in your body's ability to make milk



## How To Hand Express

- Massage and stroke your breasts to help your milk start to flow
- Position your thumb and first two fingers on either side of your areola in a “c” shape”
- Press back towards your chest wall. Avoid spreading fingers apart
- Lightly compress your fingers and thumb together. Do not squeeze or slide your fingers over the breast tissue.
- Release without removing your hand from your breast, and then repeat in a rhythmic pattern to express milk



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# How do I Feed my Baby Expressed Breastmilk?

**Breastmilk is a living food. It contains antioxidants, prebiotic, probiotic, antibacterial and immune-boosting properties.**

Some nutrients and health properties can be lost when breastmilk is frozen, defrosted, warmed up or stored incorrectly.

## When using expressed breastmilk:

- Thaw frozen milk slowly in the refrigerator or at room temperature. Do not microwave, as it removes some of the immune benefits and can create hot spots.
- Whenever possible, give your baby breastmilk that has been freshly expressed before using frozen.

## Methods for Feeding Expressed Breastmilk

### Cup Feeding:

- Pour expressed milk into a small, flexible plastic cup. Do not fill more than half full.
- Hold the cup to your baby's lips and tilt it up until the milk reaches your baby's lips.
- Allow your baby to lap up the milk at their own pace. Do not pour the milk into your baby's mouth.



### Spoon Feeding:

- Place the tip of the spoon on your baby's lower lip.
- Offer small amounts of milk and allow your baby to take the milk and swallow at their own pace.

### Paced Bottle Feeding:

- Select a medium or wide base nipple with a slow flow.
- Hold your baby almost upright, supporting their head and shoulders with your hand.
- Touch the nipple to your baby's lower lip to encourage them to take the nipple into their mouth with a deep latch.
- Hold the bottle horizontally.
- Feeding should take 15-30 minutes. If your baby is feeding too quickly, tip the bottle down or remove it from their mouth to slow the pace.



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