

Feeding your baby

First 6 Months of Life

Mum's milk is perfectly and uniquely made for your baby's growing needs and giving them your milk can make a big difference to both your baby's and your own health.

It's packed full of disease-fighting antibodies to help protect babies from illness and it changes daily, weekly and monthly to meet their growing needs.

After your baby has been looked after inside you for nine months, colostrum continues to protect your baby by giving them a special infection-fighting boost in the first few days after birth, before your milk comes in. This special booster milk is called 'colostrum' and it can't be found anywhere else.

Babies who are breastfed have a smaller chance of:

- Developing eczema.
- Getting ear, chest and tummy bugs and having to go to hospital as a result.
- Being fussy about new foods.
- Being constipated.
- Being obese and developing diabetes when they are older.

There are advantages for mums who breastfeed too:

- Breastfeeding lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.
- Breastfeeding naturally uses up about 500 extra calories a day so mums who breastfeed often find it easier to lose their pregnancy weight
- It saves money - formula feeding can cost as much as £45 a month.
- It's a lot less hassle - there is no need to clean and sterilise bottles, boil kettles and wait for the milk to cool every few hours during the day and night.

So, there's lots of good reasons to give it a go!

Your biggest supporter



Formula milk

Formula milk is made from a combination of cow's milk and other added ingredients, but it doesn't contain the ingredients that only your body can make to protect your baby. In fact, despite years of effort and lots of money spent trying to unlock the secret of mum's milk, formula milk still hasn't come close.

Getting started

Almost all women are physically able to breastfeed, but just as with any new skill it can take both you and your baby a little while to get the hang of it. Most problems can be overcome with some help in finding the right way of holding and feeding your baby.

If you are starting to breastfeed and are feeling overwhelmed, remember that after about six weeks most babies feed less often, take less time to feed and have usually settled into a pattern, so it does get a lot easier.

If you want someone else to help out with the feeding sometimes, you can express your milk and if you find that you're still struggling with breastfeeding there is lots of help available.

Getting help

- Always talk to your health visitor or midwife if you are having any difficulties.
- Call the National Breastfeeding helpline on 0300 100 0212. Lines are open 9.30am -9.30pm.
- Breastfeeding groups can be a great source of support, allowing you to talk through the ups and downs of breastfeeding with other mums experiencing the same thing.
- No problem is too small. If something is worrying you, the chances are that other mothers will have felt the same way!

Your biggest supporter



Every day counts - the longer you feed your baby breast milk, the more they benefit

Each day of mum's milk makes a difference to your baby's health

The latest scientific research shows that each day and week that you continue to breastfeed builds up to protect your baby against infections, and strengthens their ability to fight disease.

Each month of breastfeeding lowers the risk of illnesses that can put babies in hospital. Mum's milk also helps protect babies against becoming overweight or obese, which means they are less likely to develop diseases like diabetes in the future.

It's special

Mum's milk is perfectly and uniquely made for your baby and the longer you give your baby mum's milk the more they benefit.

Giving babies only mum's milk for about six months, and then combining it with solid foods after that, is ideal. And if you express your milk, your partner, or even your family and friends can help with the feeding too.

Top tips for breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding is a great time to get closer to your baby, and it's also a great chance to sit down and relax which is important for new mums. So grab a magazine or book, have a natter on the phone, or watch something good on TV.
- Once you get the hang of breastfeeding you can express your milk by hand or with a pump, so that your partner or family and friends can feed your baby and give you a break. It also means you can carry on giving your baby mum's milk if you need to go back to work.
- Breastfeeding mums give their baby lots of liquid, so breastfeeding can make you feel thirsty. Make sure you always have some water next to you when you breastfeed.

Remember, if you have any questions, or are struggling with breastfeeding there are people who are trained and skilled and there to help you. Ask your midwife or health care professional or call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212 for further help and advice.

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