



The breastfeeding checklist

Benefits for baby

Your breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. It protects your baby against gastroenteritis and diarrhoea, ear and chest infections, allergies and diabetes.

Benefits for mother

Breastfeeding reduces risk of bleeding after the birth, helps you return to pre-pregnant weight, is convenient and costs nothing. Breastfeeding also protects you against breast and ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.

Importance of skin-to-skin after birth

Keeping your baby with you promotes a feeling of closeness, which produces a strong hormonal response and is linked to higher breastfeeding success and longer breastfeeding duration. After a caesarean birth, it is possible to have your baby with you in recovery - talk to your midwife about this.

Getting position and attachment right

Your breasts are soft in the first few days before your breast milk changes from highly nutritious colostrum to mature milk. This time allows you and your baby an opportunity to learn and practice attachment and will help avoid pain and ensure your baby receives the most milk. Breastfeeding is a learned skill that takes time, patience and practice.

Demand feeding

Your baby will feed a minimum of 7 to 8 times and up to 12 times in 24 hours while breastfeeding is being established - this is very normal and will settle with time.

Rooming-in

Keeping your baby with you helps you to recognise when your baby is hungry, tired or needs a cuddle.

Bed sharing

Safe bed sharing is good for breastfeeding. However, if you or your partner smoke, use substances such as alcohol or other drugs that may alter your ability to respond to your baby's needs, then bed sharing is not recommended. This practice increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Bed sharing should not occur on couches, soft mattresses or water beds where your baby can easily become trapped.

Using teats, dummies and complementary feeds

Your young baby is learning to breastfeed and can become confused if offered a teat or dummy before they have learnt to breastfeed well. Offering fluids other than breast milk will decrease the time your baby breastfeeds, which will reduce your breast milk supply. Frequent, unrestricted suckling at the breast will satisfy your baby.

Exclusive breastfeeding to 6 months

When babies are exclusively breastfed, they need no other food or drink until at least 6 months of age. You can be confident that your baby is receiving enough breast milk when you see six or more heavy wet nappies, at least one bowel action a day in the early weeks and your baby usually settles after most feeds.

Where to get more information

Royal Women's Hospital

Cnr Grattan St and Flemington Rd
Parkville VIC 3052
Tel: (03) 8345 2000

Women's Health Information Centre

Tel: (03) 8345 3045
1800 442 007 (rural callers)

Breastfeeding Education & Support Services (BESS)

Tel: (03) 8345 2000

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Tel: 1800 686 2 686
Web: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Related fact sheet: Breastfeeding: Getting started

Disclaimer

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