

# Breastfeeding

## Getting started



the women's  
the royal women's hospital

**This guide explains how to start breastfeeding and how to tell if your baby is getting enough milk.**

### Making breastmilk

During pregnancy, your breasts start getting ready for breastfeeding. You will notice that:

- your breasts get bigger
- your nipples and areolas (the darker skin around the nipple) become darker.

In the first 2 to 3 days after birth:

- your body makes small amounts of early breastmilk, called colostrum
- this milk looks cream, yellow, or clear
- this is usually all a healthy baby needs.

About 40 to 60 hours after birth, your breastmilk starts changing to 'mature milk'. This is called your milk 'coming in'.

You will notice:

- your milk supply increases
- your breasts feel heavier and might feel a bit uncomfortable
- your breasts feel more comfortable when your milk supply matches your baby's needs.

### Hormones and breastfeeding

Your body needs a hormone called prolactin to make milk. You make prolactin when you breastfeed or express milk. The more often you breastfeed or express, the more milk your body makes.

Your body also makes a hormone called oxytocin when you breastfeed or express milk. Oxytocin makes little muscles in your breast squeeze and push your milk towards your baby. This is called the let-down reflex.

When this happens, you may notice:

- milk leaking from your other breast
- your baby's suck and swallow changes.

Some people also feel tingling or fullness in their breasts.

### Getting off to a good start at birth

Some things you can do to help your breastfeeding are:

- hold your baby skin-to-skin on your chest soon after birth
- try to feed in the first hour after birth.

We'll help you:

- recognise when your baby is ready for a feed, known as their 'feeding cues'
- position your baby
- learn how to attach your baby to your breast for a feed.

### Early breastfeeding

Breastfeeding in the first days and weeks takes time and practice. These tips may help.

- Follow your baby's feeding cues, like:
  - opening their mouth
  - licking their lips
  - turning to your breast
  - searching for your breast
  - bringing their hands to their mouth.
- Babies feed often, about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.
- Try different feeding positions that are comfortable for you and your baby.

- If your baby is sleepy, feed skin-to-skin or gently stroke their skin to help them stay awake and actively sucking.
- Offer both breasts at each feed. Swap your 'starting' breast at each feed.
- If your baby has trouble attaching, express some milk and give it to your baby using a cup or spoon.
- Try not to use a dummy, teats, or bottles if you don't need to.
- Your baby should not need infant formula or other fluids. We'll tell you if they need it.
- You'll feel tired, so rest whenever you can.
- Try to eat well and drink plenty of water when you're thirsty. Your urine (wee) should stay a light colour.

## Signs your baby is getting enough milk

These signs can show your baby is getting enough milk.

- Your baby settles between most feeds.
- You can see or hear swallowing as well as sucking during feeds. Sucking alone does not always mean your baby is getting milk.
- After your milk comes in, there are 5 to 6 heavy wet nappies every 24 hours.
- Your baby's stools (poo) change from black to yellow or mustard.
- Your baby poos at least once a day in the first 6 to 8 weeks.
- After normal early weight loss, your baby will gain weight and return to their birth weight by 2 weeks of age.
- Most babies gain about 150 grams each week in the first 3 months. Your Maternal and Child Health nurse will help you watch this growth.

Breastfeeding can feel hard at first. It often takes a few weeks before it gets easier. This is normal. Be patient and ask for help if you need it.

## For more information and advice

Speak with your local Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Call the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Line on **13 22 29** any time, day or night, to speak with a Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Call the Australian Breastfeeding Association on **1800 686 268** any time, day or night, to speak with a breastfeeding counsellor. You can also visit their website for information and support: [breastfeeding.asn.au](http://breastfeeding.asn.au)

## Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

## Family Violence Support

### 1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

[1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)