

# You're pregnant, so let's talk about feeding your baby...



the women's  
the royal women's hospital

During your pregnancy we'll talk with you about how you plan to feed your baby. Your feeding plans and past experiences matter. Whether this is your first baby or not, you may have questions.

We're here to support you.

As a Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) hospital, we help families make informed decisions about feeding. Our Breastfeeding Policy explains our commitment to your care. You can ask your midwife or nurse if you'd like to see it.

## Tell us about you and your baby

It helps us support you if we know your feeding plans and if you:

- have any medical conditions
- take any medicines
- have had any breast or nipple surgery
- have concerns about your breasts or nipples
- have had difficulty breastfeeding before
- expect your baby to have any medical needs at birth
- plan to use any infant formula.

Your midwife or doctor may recommend seeing a lactation consultant during your pregnancy. A lactation consultant is a health professional with special training in breastfeeding and infant feeding.

If you plan to use infant formula, we'll talk with you about how to make and use it safely in hospital and at home.

## Why breastfeeding matters

Breastfeeding:

- provides the ideal nutrition for your baby
- helps protect your baby against gastroenteritis and diarrhoea, ear and chest infections, allergies and diabetes
- helps reduce your bleeding after birth
- lowers your risk of breast and ovarian cancer, osteoporosis and type 2 diabetes
- can delay the return of your fertility after birth
- is convenient and free.

## Support during labour, birth and breastfeeding

Having support during labour, birth and breastfeeding is important. This support may come from your partner, a family member, a friend or someone else you trust.

They can help you:

- move around during labour
- find comfortable birth positions
- help you while feeding your baby.

## Skin-to-skin contact

After birth, we'll support skin-to-skin contact between you and your baby.

Skin-to-skin contact helps:

- keep your baby warm and calm
- support bonding
- prepare your baby for their first feed.

If you have a caesarean birth, we aim to keep your baby with you. We'll support you and your baby with the first feed.

## Signs your baby is ready to feed

Babies are born knowing how to breastfeed and it's good to follow their lead. But it can still take time, patience and practice.

Babies usually feed according to their need, about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.

Early signs your baby is ready to feed include:

- licking or sucking
- making soft noises.

We'll help you learn your baby's cues and respond to them. Feeding when your baby shows signs of hunger helps build and keep your milk supply, so you make enough breastmilk for your baby.

Some babies, including premature or unwell babies, may be sleepy. We'll encourage you to wake your baby for feeds until they can wake on their own.

## Finding a comfortable feeding position

We'll help you find feeding positions that feel comfortable for you and your baby.

There's no 'right' breastfeeding position. The best position is one that is comfortable for you and your baby. This might change from day to day.

## Keeping your baby close (rooming-in)

Keeping your baby with you:

- is the safest place for your baby
- helps you notice your baby's feeding cues
- helps you notice when your baby needs comfort or a cuddle.

## Knowing your baby is getting enough milk

**In the first few days:**

- your breasts will feel soft
- you'll produce small amounts of colostrum (early milk).

This is usually all your baby needs

**After 2 to 4 days:**

- your milk supply increases - this is called your milk 'coming in'
- your breasts should feel fuller
- your baby will have more wet and dirty nappies.

**After the first week:**

Signs your baby is getting enough milk include:

- 5 to 6 wet nappies each day
- 2 to 3 dirty nappies each day
- your baby is alert and responding to you
- your baby starts gaining weight.

Your midwife will check your baby and their weight.

## Breastfeeding recommendations

Australian guidelines and the World Health Organization recommend:

- only breastfeeding (no other food or drink) for the first 6 months
- continuing breastfeeding with other foods for up to 2 years or longer.

If your baby needs formula, your healthcare team will guide you.

## Dummies, bottles, and other drinks

While you and your baby are learning to breastfeed, it's best to only give breastmilk. Giving your baby bottles, teats, dummies or other drinks can mean your baby breastfeeds less often. This may lower your milk supply.

If your baby needs extra feeds, we'll talk with you about what to give them and the best way to give it.

Using a dummy in the early days can make breastfeeding harder to establish. Your baby might be showing you they're hungry, not just wanting comfort.

It's best to wait until feeding is going well before using a dummy.

## Conflicting breastfeeding advice

You may get different advice about breastfeeding from health professionals, family, friends or online. This can feel confusing.

Keep in mind:

- at the Women's, we share current information based on the latest evidence
- advice may change as your baby's needs change
- the best advice is advice that's up to date and works for you and your baby.

## For more information

### The Women's

Visit our website for breastfeeding fact sheets in English and other languages.

- All breastfeeding fact sheets - English [thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#breastfeeding-all-fact-sheets-in-english](https://thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#breastfeeding-all-fact-sheets-in-english)
- All breastfeeding fact sheets - other languages [thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#breastfeeding-all-fact-sheets-in-other-languages](https://thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#breastfeeding-all-fact-sheets-in-other-languages)

### Other contacts

- Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse
- Victorian Maternal & Child Health Line  
Call 13 22 29 any time of day or night to speak with a maternal and child health nurse.
- Australian Breastfeeding Association  
Call 1800 686 268 any time of day or night to speak with a breastfeeding counsellor. Visit their website for information and support. [breastfeeding.asn.au](https://breastfeeding.asn.au)

## Do you need an interpreter?



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](https://1800respect.org.au)