

## Breastfeeding - the first days

Learning how to breastfeed is a new skill. Breastfeeding is best started soon after your baby is born. If your baby feeds well straight after birth, they may then sleep for a good stretch.

Your baby may seem unsettled on day two or three while your colostrum changes to mature milk. Increased breastfeeding is often all that is needed. Letting your baby feed as much as they want in the first few days will help to establish good breastfeeding patterns and prevent breast engorgement.

### Your baby will need at least 8–12 feeds in 24 hours

Although frequent feeds may be time consuming, this is normal. The benefits include:

- The baby receives colostrum, which helps prevent infections
- Full milk production is stimulated
- The risk of breast engorgement is reduced.

### How to tell when your baby is attached properly to the breast

Your baby is attached properly if:

- Their mouth covers the nipple and a large amount of the areola, more on the lower side than the upper
- Their chin is touching the breast
- Their nose is clear of, or just touching, the breast
- Their upper and lower lips are opened out or 'flanged' over the breast.

Your baby should take a few quick sucks, and maybe a pause, before sucking strongly and rhythmically. You should not feel nipple pain if your baby is attached properly.

### Signs that your baby is getting enough milk

Signs that your baby is getting enough milk include:

- **Sucking action** – this should be slow and rhythmical after the initial fast sucking burst. The bottom jaw should be moving up and down with a deep action.
- **Breast sensations** – you may feel a drawing sensation in the breast after the baby has been sucking for a few minutes. Your breasts will feel less full and tight after a feed.
- **Body language** – your baby becomes still and peaceful. They may gently touch a hand against your breast or open and relax their fists.
- **Wet nappies and bowel motions** – these will also indicate how much a baby is getting.

### What to expect in the first days

You can expect on:

- **Day 1** – your baby will receive about half a teaspoon of colostrum at each feed, the poo will be sticky and green-black in colour and there will be one wet nappy.
- **Day 2** – your baby will receive about one teaspoon of colostrum each feed, have soft green-black poo and two wet nappies.

- **Day 3** – milk volume is increasing. Poo changes to a greenish-brown colour and there will be three wet nappies.
- **Day 4** – poo becomes more mustard in colour. There will be four wet nappies.
- **Day 5** – milk increases to 500–800 ml per day. Poo will be mustard-yellow, soft or liquid and occurs three to four times. There will be five wet nappies.
- **From day 6 on** – you can expect at least five heavy wet disposable nappies or around six to eight pale wet cloth nappies with frequent bowel motions. As your baby gets older, there may be fewer poos.

## Establishing natural breastfeeding patterns

To establish natural breastfeeding patterns:

- Let your baby feed as often as they like, day and night.
- Offer both breasts at each feed. Whether your baby takes the second breast will depend on baby's appetite. If the second breast isn't taken for long, offer that breast first next feed.
- Allow your baby to finish the first breast before offering the second.

## If you need help

In addition to midwives, some hospitals employ lactation consultants who can help you with any breastfeeding problems. You can also contact a privately employed lactation consultant. The Australian Breastfeeding Association offers a free and confidential seven-day-a-week counselling service for breastfeeding mothers.

## If your baby remains unsettled

Babies can remain unsettled after your milk comes in if:

- **They aren't getting enough milk** – for example, if they are not properly attached to the breast.
- **You detach them from the breast before they finish** – for example, when their sucking slows down. This can deprive them of the later, high-fat milk and leave them unsatisfied. Babies should detach themselves.
- **They haven't established a good sucking technique** – this can take several days to develop. In the meantime, milk may need to be expressed and given to the baby by cup or teaspoon.
- **They are not being given enough feeds** – check that your baby is being offered 8–12 feeds per day.

Babies may also become unsettled because they are lonely, bored or need attention or comfort. The use of a baby sling may help in this case.

## Where to get help

- Your midwife
- A lactation consultant – contact the Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand
- An Australian Breastfeeding Association breastfeeding counsellor Tel. 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 2 686)
- Your maternal and child health nurse
- Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 132 229
- Your doctor.

## Things to remember

- Your baby and you are learning about each other and about breastfeeding.
- Your baby needs to finish at the first breast before being offered the second.
- Around 8–12 feeds in 24 hours is normal for a new baby.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

## Australian Breastfeeding Association

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