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Breastfeeding - when to start

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- [Babies and toddlers \(0-3\) - Feeding your baby](#)
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Summary

- Breastfeeding within the first hour after birth has many benefits for your baby.
- Avoid the use of dummies and bottles, as they can prevent your baby from attaching properly to the breast.
- Avoid infant formulas if possible, as they may reduce the duration of breastfeeding and make your baby sensitive to cow's milk.

Breastfeeding should ideally start soon after your baby is born. A baby is usually alert after birth and will spontaneously seek the breast if left undisturbed in skin-to-skin contact with their mother's body. Research suggests that a mother should allow her baby to feed when the baby shows it is ready. This may be before they are weighed, bathed and dressed.

When this is not possible, skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby that allows 'getting-to-know-you' time can occur later, prior to breastfeeds.

Breastfeeding within the first hour

Breastfeeding within the first hour or so after birth is important because:

- It makes you as the mother more confident that you can breastfeed.
- Your baby starts to receive the immunological effects of colostrum (the first breastmilk, which provides protection against infection and disease).
- Your baby's digestion and bowels are stimulated.
- Sucking difficulties may be avoided if the baby feeds properly at this stage.
- The bond between you and your baby is enhanced.

Breastfeeding after a caesarean section

If you have given birth to your baby by caesarean section:

- The first breastfeed may occur in the operating room with the baby passed under the sterile drapes while you are being stitched up. When this is not possible, it will commonly occur in the recovery room, as soon as possible after delivery, or as soon as you return to your room.
- The feeding behaviour of your baby may be affected if you have had a general or epidural anaesthetic.
- The midwife should stay with you during breastfeeding if you are on intravenous drugs to relieve pain.

What to do if your baby will not latch on

If your baby will not latch on or suckle within the first hour:

- Express colostrum directly into your baby's mouth or give it by teaspoon or cup. This can stimulate your baby to seek the breast.
- Gently stroke your baby on their abdomen and legs, to help your baby to wake and seek the breast.
- Hold your baby close and have lots of skin-to-skin contact.

Your baby may be very sleepy for the next 24 hours

It is normal for babies to become very sleepy after their first feed. Putting your baby skin-to-skin on your chest can help them to waken and seek the breast for a feed. If sleepiness persists after the first day or so, you will need to wake your baby at least every three to four hours for a feed.

Avoid dummies and bottles in the early days

Dummies and bottles can interfere with your baby's ability to attach properly to the breast. This can lead to:

- Breast engorgement
- Breast refusal
- Low weight gain
- Blocked milk ducts and breast inflammation (mastitis)
- Premature weaning.

Exclusive breastfeeding promotes strong sucking, which is vital for milk production. It also helps your body return to its pre-pregnant state.

Infant formulas

The use of artificial milk formulas, when there is no medical reason for doing so, can:

- Interfere with the establishment and maintenance of successful breastfeeding
- Increase the risk that your baby will become sensitive to cow's milk protein or other allergies
- Reduce the length of time you spend breastfeeding
- Increase the risk of upper respiratory tract infection, ear infections, heart disease and obesity.

If your baby needs complementary feeds, try to use expressed breastmilk.

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 (686 2 686)
- Your maternal and child health nurse
- Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 132 229
- Your doctor.

Things to remember

- Breastfeeding within the first hour after birth has many benefits for your baby.
- Avoid the use of dummies and bottles, as they can prevent your baby from attaching properly to the breast.
- Avoid infant formulas if possible, as they may reduce the duration of breastfeeding and make your baby sensitive to cow's milk.

References

- *Breastfeeding*, Population Health Division, Department of Health and Ageing, Australian Government. [More information here.](#)
- *Breastfeeding information*, Australian Breastfeeding Association. [More information here.](#)

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Babies and toddlers (0-3)

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Babies and toddlers basics

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- [Children and health services](#)
[There is a range of subsidised and free health services, including services for mental health and dental health, available for children in Victoria...](#)
- [Early support for a child with disabilities](#)
[For children diagnosed with a disability, getting the support they need as early as possible will give them the best chance of minimising the long-term effects of the disability...](#)
- [Immunisation – deciding which vaccines you need](#)

[Everyone's immunisation needs are different and are influenced by your health, lifestyle, age and occupation...](#)

- [Maternal and child health services](#)

[Your local maternal and child health service will be a great source of support after your baby is born...](#)

- [No Jab No Play](#)

[No Jab No Play – from 1 January 2016, all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service in Victoria must provide evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age...](#)

- [Parenting services](#)

[Parenting is one of the most important tasks we undertake but it doesn't always come naturally...](#)

Newborn babies

- [Baby bath - bathing \(video\)](#)

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- [Baby bath - preparation and safety \(video\)](#)

[Detailing on baby bathing from Royal Women's Hospital...](#)

- [Baby bath - skin care \(video\)](#)

[Detail on baby skin care from Royal Women's Hospital...](#)

- [Jaundice in babies](#)

[If your baby is full-term and healthy, mild jaundice is nothing to worry about and will resolve by itself within a week or so...](#)

- [Newborn bloodspot screening](#)

[Every newborn baby in Australia is offered a newborn bloodspot screening test to identify those at risk of rare, but serious, medical conditions...](#)

- [Phenylketonuria \(PKU\)](#)

[PKU is an inherited disorder that prevents the normal breakdown of a protein found in some foods...](#)

- [Phototherapy at Home](#)

[Jaundice is very common in newborns, so it's nothing to be too worried about. Treatment is very easy and safe. It all happens using blue light from a special blanket that you wrap your baby in. The...](#)

- [Premature babies](#)

[Sometimes premature labour can be delayed to increase a baby's chance of survival...](#)

- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\)](#)

[You can reduce your baby's risk of sudden unexpected death by providing a safe sleeping environment and avoiding tobacco smoke...](#)

- [The Maternal and Child Health phone app](#)

[The Maternal & Child Health app \(MCH\) provides reliable maternal and child health \(MCH\) information that families can use every day...](#)

Feeding your baby

- [Asthma - pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)

[Pregnant women with asthma need to continue to take their asthma medication as it is important to the health of both mother and baby that the mother's asthma is well managed...](#)

- [Baby care - weaning](#)

[Be guided by your baby and let them set the pace when weaning and introducing solid foods...](#)

- [Bottle feeding - nutrition and safety](#)

[Breastmilk or commercial infant formula is necessary for all babies less than 12 months...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and travel](#)

[Breastmilk protects your baby from illness and infection, so it is the safest drink for your baby while travelling...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and work](#)

[You can successfully combine breastfeeding with work if you have support from your employer, colleagues and family...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and your diet](#)
[Breastfeeding women need to eat regularly and include a wide variety of healthy foods in their diet...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - dealing with mastitis](#)
[Mastitis affects some breastfeeding women and may be caused by blocked milk ducts or a bacterial infection...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - dealing with nipple problems](#)
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- [Breastfeeding - expressing breastmilk](#)
[Expressing breast milk by hand is a cheap and convenient method...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - the first days](#)
[Let your baby feed as much as they want in the first few days to help establish good breastfeeding patterns...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - when to start](#)
[Breastfeeding within the first hour after birth allows your baby to behave instinctively and breastfeed with little intervention...](#)
- [Food for babies - tucker talk tips](#)
[Before six months, breastmilk or formula is the only food and drink that your baby needs...](#)
- [Lactose intolerance](#)
[Symptoms of lactose intolerance include bloating, gas, abdominal pain and diarrhoea...](#)

Growth and development

- [Child development \(1\) - newborn to three months](#)
[Infants in the first eight weeks have no control over their movements and all their physical activity is involuntary or reflex...](#)
- [Child development \(2\) - three to six months](#)
[Young babies still have a notion that the whole of life is happening inside themselves, and they are 'making it all happen'...](#)
- [Child development \(3\) - six to nine months](#)
[Fun activities, such as shaking or banging objects, helps a baby understand they have an effect on the world...](#)
- [Child development \(4\) - nine to 12 months](#)
[At nine months your baby is moving around by crawling or pulling along with their arms. Safety is very important now. Your baby is also 'talking' with recognisable sounds and may even say simple words...](#)
- [Child development \(5\) - one to two years](#)
[Between the age of one and two, your toddler understands they are a completely separate person from you...](#)
- [Child development \(6\) - two to three years](#)
[Parents can be tricked into thinking our toddlers are more grown up than they really are...](#)
- [Children's feet and shoes](#)
[A child learning to walk receives important sensory information from the soles of their feet, and shoes can make walking more difficult...](#)
- [Growth charts for children](#)
[Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in 'bursts'...](#)
- [Teeth development in children](#)
[Teething symptoms are common in children and can be managed without medications...](#)
- [The Maternal and Child Health phone app](#)
[The Maternal & Child Health app \(MCH\) provides reliable maternal and child health \(MCH\) information that families can use every day...](#)
- [Toilet training](#)
[When toilet training your toddler, praise every little success and remain calm about accidents...](#)

Behaviour and learning

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)
[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)
- [10 tips to raise an optimistic child](#)
[Be a positive role model... 10 tips to raise an optimistic child...](#)
- [Anxiety and fear in children](#)
[You can help your child overcome anxiety by taking their fears seriously and encouraging them to talk about their feelings...](#)
- [Children and shyness](#)
[If your child's shyness is especially debilitating, you may like to consider professional help from a counsellor or psychologist...](#)
- [Children and sibling rivalry](#)
[Sibling rivalry is a common problem, particularly among children who are the same sex and close together in age...](#)
- [Discipline and children](#)
[Disciplining your child means teaching them responsible behaviour and self-control...](#)
- [Dummies](#)
[Dummy sucking should stop before school age to avoid teeth or mouth problems...](#)
- [Left-handedness](#)
[If your child is naturally left-handed, don't try to force them to use their right hand...](#)
- [Tantrums](#)
[When a young child is having a tantrum, it is because the emotional \(limbic system\) part of the brain is dominating the child's behaviour...](#)
- [Thumb and finger sucking](#)
[Finger or thumb sucking should stop before school age to avoid mouth problems...](#)
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[If you restrict yourself to a narrow range of foods, your child will notice and copy your wariness...](#)
- [Toddlers and mealtime manners](#)
[Some toddlers do most of their eating on the run, refusing to sit down at the table at all...](#)

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[Be guided by your baby and let them set the pace when weaning and introducing solid foods...](#)
- [Breakfast](#)
[Children who skip breakfast may lack sufficient vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B2...](#)
- [Childcare and healthy eating](#)
[Childcare centres should provide healthy meals for your children...](#)
- [Children's diet - fruit and vegetables](#)
[If you eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables every day, your child may eventually follow your lead...](#)
- [Eating tips for babies](#)
[First foods for babies can be prepared easily and cheaply at home without salt, seasonings and sweeteners...](#)
- [Eating tips for children \(3\) - older toddlers](#)
[Offer children the same foods as the family, with a variety of textures and flavours for balanced nutrition...](#)
- [Eating tips for young toddlers](#)
[Children have a natural ability to sense when they are hungry and when they are full...](#)
- [Soft drinks, juice and sweet drinks - children](#)

[Encourage children to drink and enjoy water. Sweet drinks such as juice, cordial and soft drinks may cause health problems for children if consumed in large amounts...](#)

- [Toddlers and fussy eating](#)

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- [Child safety in the car](#)

[Taking care to restrain children correctly while travelling in a car is the best way to prevent injuries...](#)

- [Dental checks for young children](#)

[Children should have an oral health check by the time they turn two...](#)

- [Immunisations - vaccinations in Victoria, Australia \(video\)](#)

[Vaccinations are encouraged for all individuals living in the state of Victoria, Australia. The immunisation program in Victoria may be different than other countries, and individuals who have moved...](#)

- [Melissa's story \(video\)](#)

[Melissa shares her story of how her baby caught chickenpox at 5 weeks old...](#)

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[If your child is old enough, involve them in planning a trip so they can get excited about it...](#)

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[Parents and children talk about some of the factors that can cause a child's asthma to flare up...](#)

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[Children with back pain may grow into adults with chronic bad backs, so it is important to encourage sensible back care...](#)

- [Bedwetting](#)

[Bedwetting is a problem for many children and punishing them for it will only add to their distress...](#)

- [Bronchiolitis](#)
[Bronchiolitis is a common chest infection in babies under six months of age...](#)
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[A healthy diet, plenty of fluids, exercise and regular toilet habits can help relieve constipation in children...](#)
- [Cradle cap](#)
[Cradle cap is not contagious and it is not caused by poor hygiene or bad parenting...](#)
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[Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...](#)
- [Fever - children](#)
[Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...](#)
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[Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea \(runny or watery poo\) and...](#)
- [Nappy rash](#)
[Most babies get nappy rash at some stage, no matter how well they are cared for...](#)
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- [Roseola infantum](#)
[Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children...](#)

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- [Sleep and your baby](#)
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- [Sleep - children and naps](#)
[A child needs a daytime nap until they are around two and a half to three years of age...](#)
- [Sleep - children and nightmares](#)
[Your child may have only a few scary dreams a year, or be troubled by nightmares much more often...](#)
- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\)](#)
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[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)
- [Babies and safety](#)
[Most injuries to babies do not occur by chance - many are predictable and largely preventable...](#)
- [Baby care - moving from cot to bed](#)
[Some children are unsettled the first few nights in a 'big bed'. Try to be patient, loving and reassuring...](#)
- [Baby furniture - safety tips](#)
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- [Bicycle safety and children](#)

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- [Burns and scalds - children](#)

[Most hot tap water scald injuries to children happen in the bathroom...](#)

- [Child safety and injury prevention](#)

[By making a few practical changes to your home, you can dramatically reduce the risk of injury to your child...](#)

- [Child safety – at home](#)

[The best way to reduce the risk of injury to children is to remove a potentially dangerous item or add a safety product...](#)

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[Taking care to restrain children correctly while travelling in a car is the best way to prevent injuries...](#)

- [Family violence and children](#)

[Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems...](#)

- [Farm safety – children](#)

[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)

- [Hot weather and child safety](#)

[Babies and children can quickly lose body fluids in hot weather, which can lead to dehydration...](#)

- [Playgrounds and child safety](#)

[Play environments can be safe and beneficial for your child. With proper planning, you can make sure your child gets plenty of playtime activity...](#)

- [Poisoning and child safety](#)

[Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately if you suspect your child has been poisoned or given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine...](#)

- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)

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[Toddlers are most at risk of drowning because they are mobile and curious but don't understand the danger of water...](#)

Grief and trauma

- [Child Protection Service](#)

[Child Protection provides child-centred, family-focused services to protect children from harm caused by abuse within the family...](#)

- [Death of a baby](#)

[Miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death is a shattering event for those expecting a baby, and for their families. Grief, relationship stresses and anxiety about subsequent pregnancies are common in...](#)

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[Babies and toddlers can be as affected by trauma as any other family member...](#)

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[Tell your child the facts about a distressing or frightening experience using language they can understand...](#)

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[Preschoolers may not have the words but will show their distress at traumatic events through changes in behaviour and functioning...](#)

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Let your baby feed as much as they want in the first few days to help establish good breastfeeding patterns...

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Related information on other websites

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This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Department of Health and Human Services - CHI - HSR&I - Maternity & Newborn Clinical Network



Last updated: February 2012

Page content currently being reviewed.

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