

Feeding your baby

The best start in life

At birth, giving your baby a long cuddle: Skin to skin contact for up to one hour, calms both mum and baby, it regulates baby's heart rate and temperature, and stimulates mothering hormones which helps to form a close bond and increase breast milk supply. Baby's immediate needs are to feel safe and secure, and to be able to feed whenever hungry. Holding your baby close to feed, and responding to all of baby's needs encourages healthy brain connections. Most of this development will occur within the first two years. Responsive parenting will enable your baby to reach its full potential, to help them form good relationships and communicate well, giving them the best start in life.

Sterilising and bottle hygiene

- All the equipment you use for bottle feeding your baby needs to be washed in hot soapy water, rinsed and sterilised.
- The cleaning and sterilising instructions are the same, whether you are using expressed breast milk or infant formula milk.
- You need to keep sterilising your feeding equipment until your baby is at least six months old.
- Infections (like gastroenteritis) are rare, but if they do occur, can be very serious.

Feeding tips

How to tell your baby is having lots of milk:

- Lots of wet heavy nappies - around six in 24 hours.
- Dirty nappies, two to three soft stools daily until four to six weeks, after which two to three per week.
- Baby is content and settled during and after each feed.
- During a feed, you can hear baby swallowing.
- Weight gain - checked by your health visitor at the local baby clinic.

Remember, your milk fulfils all of your baby's needs for around six months. It also reduces the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Ordinary supermarket cow's milk should not be offered until your baby reaches one year, although it is suitable to use from six months in breakfast cereals.

1. Hold your baby's body close with their nose level with your nipple to help them attach correctly.
2. Let your baby's head tip back a little so that their top lip can brush against your nipple. This should help your baby to make a wide open mouth.
3. When your baby's mouth opens wide, **their chin is able to touch your breast first**, with their head tilted, so that their lower lip can make contact with the breast 2-3cm below the nipple.
4. With their chin firmly touching and their nose clear, their mouth is wide open and there will be much more of the darker skin visible above your baby's top lip than below their bottom lip. Your baby's cheeks will look full and rounded as they feed.

There are lots of different positions for breastfeeding. You just need to check the following:

- **Are your baby's head and body in a straight line?** If not, your baby might not be able to swallow easily.
- **Are you holding your baby close to you?** Support their neck, shoulders and back. They should be able to tilt their head back easily.

Introducing solid foods or 'weaning'

Weaning should start when your baby is around 6 months old. Gradually, you'll be able to increase the amount and variety of solid food your baby eats until the main part of their diet is solid food and they can eventually eat the same food as the rest of your family, in smaller portions.

[solid-foods.pdf](#)

1. Have you been shown how to hand express? This is a really useful skill, and it's free.
2. For further breastfeeding support or one-to-one assistance contact the Infant Feeding Helpline during office hours 020 8496 5222.
3. The Best Start team host infant feeding cafes and drop-in sessions in Children & Family Centres, visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/cypd to find out what's on near you. Other mums and Peer Supporters will be there to give you lots of tips.