

Infant feeding

Frequently asked questions and frequently heard statements:

Will I be able to feed - I have small breasts?

It is irrelevant what size and shape your breasts are. If your baby is positioned perfectly for you body you will feed baby well.

Will I be able to feed - I have flat nipples?

Babies feed from a mouthful of areola (the dark pigmented area around the nipple) and not from the nipple itself.

Will I be able to feed - I have inverted nipples?

It can sometimes take a little time and perseverance to help baby latch onto a true inverted nipple. It is important that you get help from your midwife

Can I mix feed?

Yes you can if that is what you choose to do. However, it is important that you allow time to stimulate your milk supply otherwise your breast milk will dwindle.

If I give the colostrum that is the best bit?

Colostrum is the first milk which is very concentrated nutrition and in small amounts. Any breast milk that you can give your baby is beneficial but the longer that you breast feed the more protection you can give to baby.

Dad won't be able to feed baby.

Dad won't be able to breast feed but he can spend time in skin to skin contact, soothing and comforting baby, bathing baby, changing nappies.

Bottle fed babies sleep longer!

Research does suggest that bottle-fed babies may sleep for longer periods, but they don't have a better quality of sleep than breastfed babies. Formula milk is harder to digest and stays in baby's gut for longer, so it begins to ferment and this means that they will have much smellier and bulkier nappies.

Bottle fed babies grow faster

Evidence suggests that bottle-fed babies are heavier than breastfed babies at one year of age, but weight gain is not healthy.

How will I know how much milk baby is getting when I breastfeed?

There is no easy way to estimate how much milk a breastfed baby takes but it is not necessary to know.

If your baby feeds in a deep rhythmical sucking pattern with pauses and swallowing and feeding is comfortable then he is taking in enough milk

You will also be reassured if your baby has frequent heavy, wet and dirty nappies.

Breastfeeding makes your breasts saggy

This is not true, the hormones of pregnancy cause permanent changes within the breast. So it isn't breastfeeding that alone that cause these changes. The best thing to do is wear a supportive bra.

It is embarrassing to breast feed in public

Until you feel comfortable with breastfeeding you may feel a little shy feeding in public. It is good to go to a breastfeeding group where all mothers are feeding their babies. They will have some great tips to make it easier for you.

Formula milks are as good as breast milk!

Formula milks in the UK are a safe alternative but they do not replicate breast milk. They do not contain antibodies to fight infections, enzymes to aid efficient digestion and hormones which help the baby. Also the proteins and fats are fundamentally different from those found in breastmilk.

Breastfeeding hurts

Provided you get the right help in helping baby get into the right position for attaching at the breast it should feel comfortable.

How often should baby feed?

Baby should be fed in response to feeding cues. Some feeds will be short if he just wants a drink or a cuddle and some will be long. Some feeds will be close together and some further apart. Only baby, will know, when he has had enough milk. The average baby will feed about 8 – 12 times in 24 hours. Breastfeeding is a reciprocal arrangement between mum and baby so it is also OK to stimulate baby to feed if your breasts are full or you need to be somewhere.

How long can I store breast milk?

Breast milk can be stored for up to five hours outside the fridge and up to five days in a fridge which is less than 0.4 °c.

See the Department of Health 'Off to the best start leaflet' or the 'Mothers and Others Guide' given out after the birth of your baby.

How do I bottle feed my baby when I am away from home?

Milk powder should be reconstituted as near the time of the feed as possible, with water at no less than 70°c. It is best to take a sterile bottle out with you and a thermos flask of boiled water with a measured amount of milk powder. Alternatively take a carton of ready made formula and a sterile bottle.

Do I have to use 'follow on' milk after six months?

Breastfeeding can continue after six months for as long as mum and baby wish. However, solid food should be introduced after this time to ensure baby has the nutrition he needs. Follow on milk is not required as first milk has similar properties.

Is 'hungrier baby' milk suitable for my baby?

Hungrier baby milk has a different ratio of cow milk proteins, which can be more difficult for baby to digest. This may cause discomfort for some babies as they are more likely to develop constipation.

What formula milk is best for my baby?

It is impossible to say if one brand of formula milk is better than another. Each formula has to have similar levels of protein fats, vitamins and minerals. It is best to try one and stick to the same one.

Does my baby need any extra water when the weather is warm?

No your breasts will provide exactly what your baby requires. In hot weather you may find baby wants to go to your breast for short feeds. This may be because he wants a drink rather than a full feed.

Do I need to eat/drink more when I am breastfeeding?

For good health it is important that you eat a varied diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables regardless if you are breast or bottle feeding your baby. It is important to eat to appetite and drink to quench your thirst. You do not need extra calories as during pregnancy you will have laid down some fat for this purpose.

Should I be worried about getting sore nipples as I have fair/red hair?

No, the colour of your hair should not predispose to sore nipples. Ensuring that your baby is positioned and attached well at your breast you should be comfortable.

My baby has a tongue tie!

About one in ten babies is thought to have a tongue tie. This is, for the majority of babies not problematic. However in a small number of babies it can cause difficulty with breastfeeding. If you are having problems breastfeeding and your baby has a tongue tie speak to your midwife/health visitor.