

Breastfeeding:

Getting ready during pregnancy



Breastfeeding can be one of the most rewarding aspects of motherhood. Sometimes getting there can be a bit challenging - we are here to support you to find your way.

This document should help you to understand:

1. **The Science Bit:** how breastfeeding works and why it's important
2. **The Practicalities of Breastfeeding a Newborn:** what to expect from breastfeeding your baby
3. **How to Breastfeed:** how to achieve comfortable and effective breastfeeding
4. **Overcoming Breastfeeding Challenges:** what to do if you face any difficulties
5. **Keeping Mum and Baby Safe:** related issues such as safe sleeping and how to keep healthy
6. **Beautiful Breastfeeding:** find out how you and your baby can work together to create an enjoyable and successful breastfeeding relationship
7. **Help!:** where can you get some support
8. **Further Reading**

[Disclaimer: This document was put together during the Covid 19 outbreak when all face-to-face workshops were suspended. The resources have been selected from the internet and are for information only. Information does not necessarily reflect the views of the Infant Feeding Team at St George's Hospital. This document is intended to compliment the care and information you receive from your midwifery team.]

1. THE SCIENCE BIT

How breastfeeding works and why it's important

Understanding how your body can produce milk and what breastmilk contains should help you make sense of typical feeding behaviours and why there is such a strong public health message to breastfeed your child for as long as you feel able to.

- **Explaining the anatomy and physiology of your breasts**
<https://youtu.be/iv28TEA99rg>
- **How milk is made**
 - <https://youtu.be/cMhgFt1xT7cShare>
 - <https://abm.me.uk/how-lactation-works/>
- **What's in breastmilk**
 - <https://parentingthefuture.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/whats-in-breastmilk-poster-canada.jpg>
 - <http://www.human-milk.com/infographic/leaflet.html>
- **Why does breastfeeding matter?**
 - The World Health Organisation states that breastfeeding is the optimal form of nutrition for your baby. They recommend:
 - initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth
 - exclusively breastfeeding your child for the first 6 months of life
 - mothers should continue to breastfeed the child to some degree up to 2 years or beyond
<https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/breastfeeding/en/>
 - **Benefits of breastfeeding**
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/benefits-breastfeeding/>
 - <https://www.lli.org/why-breastfeeding-is-good-for-mothers-mental-health/>

2. THE PRACTICALITIES OF BREASTFEEDING A NEWBORN

What to expect when breastfeeding your baby

We encourage families to feed their babies **responsively** (i.e. when you see your baby's feeding cues) as long as your baby is well. As a general rule you should aim to feed your baby **8-12 times in 24 hours**. A normal feed lasts **5-40min**, though sometimes babies will want to cluster feed for longer periods. Avoid leaving long gaps between feeds as newborn babies need to feed little and often – this may mean you have to be pro-active in waking your baby for a feed, particularly in the early days when your milk supply is not yet established and your baby is still recovering from the birth and acclimatising to life outside of the womb.

- **How much milk does my baby need?**

Your milk volumes change quite rapidly in the early days as your milk transitions from early milk (colostrum) to mature milk. We usually expect your mature milk to come in from day 3 to 5 after birth, though this can vary depending on your individual situation. In the first 24 hours (day 0-1), a healthy term baby needs around 5-7ml colostrum in total so 0.3ml could be a good feed if feeding frequently. By day 3 we would expect your baby to be having around 30ml per feed. If you are breastfeeding, you won't have a concept of how much milk your baby is getting so we need to look at the wider picture (see below). If you need to express for any reason, it is likely that you will need a feeding plan in place to help you establish breastfeeding. Please speak to your midwife if you have any concerns about the volume of milk your baby is getting or if you need support to help your baby to feed well at the breast.

- **How do I know my baby is getting enough milk?**

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding-is-baby-getting-enough-milk/>
- <https://www.laleche.org.uk/signs-effective-feeding-early-days-2/>

3. HOW TO BREASTFEED

How to achieve comfortable and effective breastfeeding

Whilst there are no set rules to successful breastfeeding, the following principles can help you support your newborn baby to follow their own feeding instincts and feed effectively at the breast.

PREPARING FOR A FEED

- **The Magic Hour**
Read about the 9 instinctive steps your baby takes in the first few hours after birth
<http://magicalhour.org/aboutus.html>
- **Skin to Skin**
Keeping your baby in close skin contact has many health benefits and is an excellent way to initiate feeding
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/implementing-standards-resources/skin-to-skin-contact/>
- **Feeding cues**
Be responsive to your baby – are they ready to feed?
 - <https://www.breastfeedinginsheffield.co.uk/mum-and-baby/baby-feeding-cues/>
 - <https://kellymom.com/bf/normal/hunger-cues/>

POSITION AND ATTACHMENT: THE CORNERSTONE OF SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING

Adopting a position that is comfortable for you and your baby will allow you both to relax so that your baby can feed for as long as they need. Supporting your baby to latch deeply onto the breast will ensure that their sucking efforts are effective and that you remain comfortable.

- **The CHINS principle**
 - C**
Hold your baby **CLOSE** so their knees touch you too and they don't have to stretch – use pillows/props to take their weight
 - H**
With your palm across their back, your fingers should come up just behind your baby's ears, giving support whilst allowing your baby's **HEAD** to **TILT** back as they get ready to latch on
 - I**
Keep your baby comfortable and avoid twisting by positioning them so that their ear, shoulder and hip are all **IN LINE**

N

You should position your baby's **NOSE** to your **NIPPLE** (opposed to mouth to nipple) so that they are looking up at it. When your baby is ready to feed, they will open their mouth and tilt their head back; you can then use your palm to bring their body forward, aiming for their chin to make contact with your breast first before using your fingers to roll their wide open mouth up and onto the breast, like placing a coat on a coat hook. You should bring your baby onto the breast quickly and confidently to take advantage of their wide mouth (it only happens fleetingly).

S

S for **SUSTAINABLE** – how comfortable are you? Enough pillows? Been to the toilet? Water and snacks nearby? Phone to hand? Sort yourself out first - you may be there for a while!!

If your baby is latched well on the breast, their **CHIN** will be pressing firmly into the breast and maintain close contact for the duration of the feed. The chin plays an important role in massaging the breast tissue to help the milk to flow.

- **How to hold your baby**

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/breastfeeding-positions/?portfolioCats=191%2C94%2C13%2C23%2C65>

- **How to support your baby to latch deeply onto the breast**

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/breastfeeding-attachment/?portfolioCats=191%2C94%2C13%2C23%2C65>

- **Breast Compressions**

Compressions are a great way to help the milk to start flowing nicely at the start of a feed and to encourage active sucking if your baby becomes sleepy whilst feeding. <https://youtu.be/Oh-nnTps1Ls>

- **Hand expressing**

<https://youtu.be/axQi5PqRZ0M>

4. OVERCOMING BREASTFEEDING CHALLENGES

What to do if you face any difficulties

Breastfeeding can sometimes throw up curve balls that can make life a little bit harder. Here are some common issues with advice on how to overcome them:

- **Struggling to establish breastfeeding.** If you are having issues with a non-latching baby or low milk supply please speak to your midwife or the Infant Feeding Team for support as you will need a feeding assessment and feeding plan
- **Mix feeding**
 - **Pumping:** <https://kellymom.com/category/bf/pumpingmoms/pumping/>
 - **Dietary information:** <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/infant-milks-overview>
- **Engorgement**
<https://kellymom.com/bf/concerns/mother/engorgement/>
- **Sore nipples**
<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info/breastfeeding-sore-nipples/>
- **Mastitis**
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mastitis/>
 - <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/publications-leaflets/>
- **Blocked ducts**
<https://www.nct.org.uk/baby-toddler/feeding/common-concerns/blocked-milk-ducts>

5. KEEPING MUM AND BABY SAFE AND HEALTHY

Related issues such as safe sleeping and how to keep healthy

Breastfeeding has many benefits for your whole family. Follow the guidance below to help you enjoy this way of mothering. Please speak to your midwife or GP if you have any specific concerns.

- **Safe sleeping**
 - <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/>
 - <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/sleep-and-night-time-resources/caring-for-your-baby-at-night/>
- **Dietary advice**
<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/breastfeeding/healthy-diet/food-and-drinks-to-include/>
- **Drugs in breastmilk**
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/detailed-information/drugs-in-breastmilk/>

6. BEAUTIFUL BREASTFEEDING

Find out how you and your baby can work together to create an enjoyable and successful breastfeeding relationship

Breastfeeding isn't always easy, but you can take steps to make it more enjoyable.

- **Embrace the 'fourth trimester' and take things slowly**
<https://www.nct.org.uk/baby-toddler/emotional-and-social-development/what-fourth-trimester>
- **Mindful breastfeeding**
<https://www.laleche.org.uk/mindful-breastfeeding/>
- **Take a break**
Prioritise sleep over social engagements. Rest is so important for the health of you and your baby. If sleep is hard to come by, pop some relaxing music on and try to relax for a few moments.
<https://youtu.be/V3u7mNTG09g>
- **Get support from your family and your partner**
You are not in this alone, and you need looking after too!
<https://www.nct.org.uk/baby-toddler/feeding/tips-for-dads-and-partners/how-can-dads-and-partners-support-breastfeeding>
- **Find your tribe!**
Parenting a newborn can be a lonely world. Stay connected - there are loads of networks you can access online and in your local community. Feeling the solidarity of other mums can be a saving grace at the 3am feed!
- **Finding your way**
When it comes to breastfeeding, there is no rulebook.
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/what-breastfeeding-looks-like/>

7. HELP!

Where can you get some support?

There is lots of support available to help you and your baby get breastfeeding off to the best start.

- In the hospital, all of our midwives, maternity support workers and healthcare assistants are trained at giving feeding support.
- At home, your community midwife and health visitor can give you feeding support.
- There is also a range of breastfeeding support groups (details included in your discharge pack). If you live in a different area, your community midwife will be able to advise you about local services.
- The Infant Feeding team work with women who are experiencing more complex feeding issues. If you feel you need support or need some advice on where to go, please call us on 07766800365.
- National Breastfeeding Helpline 0300 100 0212

8. FURTHER READING

For those who want to do some further reading, we have highlighted some resources below. Remember that whilst it is great to do some research in pregnancy, the greatest lesson will take place alongside your baby as you learn together.

Online resources

- Off to the Best Start (UNICEF) Leaflet <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/off-to-the-best-start/>
- kellymom.com – a fount of reliable, evidence-based breastfeeding knowledge
- Support with the first 5 days of breastfeeding <https://firstdroplets.com/abcs/>
- The Breastfeeding Network <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>
- Association of Breastfeeding Mothers <https://abm.me.uk/>
- La Leche League <https://www.laleche.org.uk/>
- National Childbirth Trust (NCT) <https://www.nct.org.uk/baby-toddler/feeding/early-days/about-breastmilk-and-breastfeeding>
- Maternity Action (Breastfeeding and work) <https://maternityaction.org.uk/advice/continuing-to-breastfeed-when-you-return-to-work/>

Some books we've read that are easy to read and have good quality information:

- You've got it in you - a positive guide to breastfeeding (Emma Pickett)
- The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding (La Leche League International)
- Dr Jack Newman's Guide to Breastfeeding
- Birth and Breastfeeding (Michel Odent)
- The Fourth Trimester (Kimberly Johnson)
- What Mothers Do, Especially When it Looks Like Nothing (Naomi Stadlen)