

Maternity

How to start breastfeeding

Information for patients, relatives and carers

This information booklet will provide you with information, such as when to feed your baby, how to know if your baby is getting enough milk, and what you can do if baby is finding it difficult to latch



Starting breastfeeding

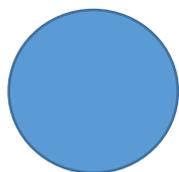
All babies are different; some are born wanting to feed straight away and know what they are doing almost immediately, whilst others take their time and may need some encouragement to get started.

Some babies require extra monitoring and feeding support when they are born, and you will be told if this is the case for your baby. Extra plans will be put in place in addition to the following advice written below.

How much milk is my baby getting?

In the first few days your breasts are producing very small amounts of colostrum; it may be a few drops, or one to two teaspoons per feed. These small amounts mean that your breasts will

not feel heavy or full until the milk ‘comes in’, which can be around days three or four. It also means you are unlikely to hear your baby swallow and you won’t see milk around the baby’s mouth after a feed. Your baby’s tummy is the size of a small marble, so it doesn’t need very much to begin with.



Approximate size of a newborn baby’s stomach (1-3ml)

Colostrum:

- Is very rich and contains all the nutrients your baby requires.
- Helps your baby’s digestive system to develop.
- Helps your baby’s immune system to develop, as it contains properties which will help to protect your baby from infection.
- Acts as a laxative as it clears the meconium (black stool) out of your baby’s system, which can help reduce the chance of jaundice.

How often should my baby feed?

Please note that **babies do not feed at regular intervals.**

They may ‘cluster feed’ with short gaps between feeds, followed by periods of longer gaps between feeds.

As shown in the table below, from days 2-3 onwards your baby should have a minimum of 8 feeds in a 24-hour period. You will need to wake your baby if they have slept for longer than 4 hours between feeds.

Age of baby	Number of feeds
1-2 hours old	At least 1
12 hours	At least 2 in total
24 hours	At least 3-4 in total
Day 2	At least 6-8 in 24 hours
Day 3 onwards	At least 8 in 24 hours

What you should see in a nappy:

The contents of your baby’s nappies will change during the first week. These changes will help you know if feeding is going well. Speak to your midwife if you have any concerns.		
Baby’s age	Wet nappies	Dirty nappies

1-2 days old	1-2 or more over 24 hours. Babies may pass a pink/orange substance called urates. It is not a problem at this age, but please tell your midwife if you see this after your baby is two days old.	1 or more dark green/black 'tar like' (called meconium) per day
3-4 days old	3 or more per day Nappies feel heavier	2 or more per day, changing in colour and consistency: brown/green/yellow, becoming looser (‘changing stool’)
5-6 days old	5 or more Heavy wet	2 or more Yellow; may be quite watery
7-28 days old	6 or more Heavy wet	2 or more, at least the size of a £2 coin Yellow and watery, ‘seedy’ appearance

How do I know my baby wants a feed?

When your baby is hungry, they will start showing feeding cues (signs they would like to feed), these are divided into early, mid and late cues.

Early signs of hunger can include:

- Turning their head from side-to-side/rooting/looking for the breast
- Stirring
- Opening their mouth

Mid signs of hunger can include:

- Stretching
- Increasing their movements
- Lip smacking, fist sucking and tongue poking.

Keeping your baby close to you will help you to recognise these signs.

Crying is a late sign of hunger, responding to earlier cues makes it easier to attach baby to the breast.



Responsive feeding

What is meant by responsive feeding?

- Feeding when your baby shows the early feeding cues (signs they are hungry) discussed above
- Offering the breast when your breasts feel full
- Offering the breast when your baby needs comforting
- Offering the breast when you or your baby want to rest and relax
- Understanding that your baby cannot be overfed, and it is always appropriate to offer the breast

Responding to your baby's needs and continuing to form a bond with them releases the love hormone called oxytocin. Oxytocin helps your baby feel secure and loved which is good for their brain development now and in the future.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough milk?

Signs to look out for include:

- Your baby has a minimum of 8 feeds in 24 hours
- Your baby feeds for between 5 and 45 minutes
- There are enough wet and dirty nappies as outlined in the table above
- Your baby is calm and relaxed during a feed and settles after
- Your breasts and nipples are comfortable after a feed

What should I do if my baby is not interested in feeding?

- If, by the time your baby is more than six hours old, they have not shown any more signs of wanting to feed, then: Lift your baby out of the cot and undress them, leaving them in just their nappy.

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- Lie back in the bed so that you are almost flat.
 - Place your baby **tummy down** onto your chest ensuring there is no material between you and your baby. In other words, your baby is laying skin-to-skin on you.
 - Position your baby so their head is on your chest and **their body is lying between your breasts** and not across them. **Ensure you can see your baby's face, especially their mouth and nose**
 - Cover the baby's back with a blanket.

Skin to skin contact:

- Keeps the baby warm
- Helps to regulate baby's breathing and heart rate.
- Calms both you and baby.
- Stimulates baby's natural feeding reflexes.
- Increases your breastmilk supply.

If your baby is ready to feed, they will start bobbing their head up and down against your chest, mouthing and licking your skin, and eventually use their legs and arms to move over to the nipple, self-attach and start feeding. This process can take some time.

Ask a member of staff to help you; bearing in mind the baby does most of the work!

It's important to know that skin-to-skin is not just for in the hospital. It can be used at any time to help stimulate the baby's feeding reflexes, to regulate their breathing, temperature and heart rate, as well as to help the bond between you and your baby.

What do I do if the baby still doesn't want to feed?

If you've tried the above and your baby does not show signs of wanting to feed, please **ask a member of staff** to show you how to hand express a few drops of colostrum to give to the baby. They will provide you with everything you need, including a leaflet which outlines the technique.

Hand expressing:

- Gives your baby the small amount of colostrum they need.
- Stimulates your breasts to produce more milk both now and in the future.

You can watch a video about hand expressing by scanning this QR Code:



When the baby has been given the colostrum, keep the baby on your chest for a little longer as they may start to look for more colostrum after this little 'feed'.

Continue putting your baby skin-to-skin at least every three hours, and hand express colostrum if necessary, until your baby starts feeding for themselves.

Ward staff will check your baby regularly until this happens.

My baby seems to want to feed all the time, what do I do?

You may be worried that you are not producing enough colostrum, but this is usually the least likely explanation. A crying baby may not be hungry but just needs a cuddle.

- Ask a member of staff to check that your baby is effectively positioned and attached.
- Put the baby onto your chest skin-to-skin as described above as most babies find this very comforting.
- Keep in mind that frequent and responsive feeds in the early days will ensure your breasts can produce enough milk in the future.
- If you are planning to breastfeed, we would not advise that you give a bottle of formula to your baby unless this is medically necessary, as it can interfere with helping your baby learn how to breastfeed well, and it may affect your milk supply.

Where can I get more support and information?

We recommend that all parents download the Mum & Baby App.

This is a free app which has been produced by midwives and doctors working in Northwest London, and provides information on pregnancy, birth, and life with a new baby.

There are also feeding videos on the app which can be helpful to watch when you are learning to breastfeed.



You can also scan this QR code which directs you to a website with all the links compiled by the infant feeding team.

This website has useful information and videos to support you with your breastfeeding journey.

Telephone Support:



National Breastfeeding Helpline	0300 100 0212	9.30am - 9.30pm
Association of Breastfeeding Mothers	0300 330 5453	9.30am - 10.30pm
La Leche League	0345 120 2918	8am - 11pm
National Childbirth Trust (NCT)	0300 330 0700	8am - midnight

Online Support:

Support with breastfeeding:

Mum and Baby App	Available to download for free from the app store
UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative	www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/
Global Health Media	www.globalhealthmedia.org/videos/
Best Beginnings	www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/from-bump-to-breastfeeding
Off to the Best Start leaflet	www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/off-to-the-best-start

Charities providing support:

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers	www.abm.me.uk/
The Breastfeeding Network	www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
La Leche League	www.laleche.org.uk/
National Childbirth Trust (NCT)	www.nct.org.uk/

Support with safe sleeping practices:

BASIS	www.basionline.org.uk
Lullaby Trust	www.lullabytrust.org.uk

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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