



Supporting Breastfeeding

Why is Breastfeeding such a good idea?

- * breast milk is natural - it's the food specifically designed for your baby
- * breast milk changes as your baby grows so they get exactly what they need
- * breastfeeding helps protect your baby from infections because antibodies are passed into the milk
- * exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of life because it provides all the nutrients a baby needs
- * breastfed babies are five times less likely to be admitted to hospital with infections such as gastroenteritis and respiratory infections
- * it will also help to avoid constipation in your baby
- * breastfed babies are less likely to get allergies like eczema
- * breast milk contains growth factors and hormones that help your baby develop

Why breastfeeding is best for mothers

- * breastfeeding is free
- * there is no need to sterilise bottles, prepare feeds or keep your baby waiting
- * you can do it anytime, any place, anywhere
- * breastfeeding is a lot easier than bottle-feeding in the middle of the night
- * your womb will return to normal size more quickly
- * you will use more calories
- * breastfeeding reduces the risk of pre-menopausal breast cancer

Remember: Breastfeeding is a skill and all new skills need practice. If you want to breastfeed and are finding it difficult ask your midwife to help or see a breastfeeding counsellor (see over). What do I need to know about breastfeeding?

You may find it useful to know how breastfeeding works and what is normal behaviour for breastfed babies:

- Breastfed babies usually feed frequently in the early weeks, especially evenings, but every baby is different. Some babies are slow feeders at first, they may doze during feeds, but they get quicker as they get older. The more baby feeds, the more milk the mother's breasts make. Babies are less likely to experience colic if they finish the first breast before being offered the second - one breast may be enough, but it is best to offer the second anyway to be sure.
- Nipple soreness or pain during feeding is often a sign that the baby is not getting a good mouthful of breast, which often means the position is not correct - Specialist help is available from health professionals (midwives & health visitors) and breastfeeding counsellors for details see over. How long should a mother breastfeed? As long as she and your baby want to.
- Breastfeeding for 6 months makes infections less likely for at least a year. • Breastmilk is a complete food for the baby for at least 6 months. • Babies breastfed for a year can bypass formula.

