

The importance of breastfeeding

Your breastmilk is the perfect food for your baby's growth and development and helps you and your baby to bond strongly. It helps to protect your baby against infections, allergies, diabetes and childhood obesity. Breastfeeding helps you return to your pre-pregnant weight and reduces the risk of bleeding after birth. It reduces your risk of ovarian and breast cancer, and osteoporosis (bone softening) later in life. Breastfeeding is free, safe and very convenient.

Uninterrupted skin to skin contact after birth

Placing your baby skin-to-skin on your bare chest straight after birth promotes a feeling of closeness and produces strong hormonal responses. This enables you and your baby to feel calm and your baby stays warm and can start to breastfeed soon after birth when baby's instincts are strong. This has been shown to promote breastfeeding success and a longer breastfeeding duration.

This initial skin-to-skin contact can ideally continue uninterrupted until after the first breastfeed or at one hour. Your midwife will help you to recognise when your baby is ready for a feed during this time. Skin-to-skin contact is also encouraged after a caesarean or complicated birth if mother and baby are well, and during your hospital stay and at home.



Learning how to breastfeed

Breastfeeding can take time to learn for both mother and baby. In the first few days, your breasts are soft before your breastmilk starts to change from colostrum (the first milk) to mature milk and your breasts start to fill. This time allows you and your baby an opportunity to learn and practice correct positioning and attachment. This will help to avoid nipple pain and ensure your baby receives enough milk.



Responsive feeding

Newborn babies normally breastfeed between 8-12 times in 24 hours in the first few weeks while breastfeeding is being established. This frequent feeding is normal and will change as your milk supply establishes and your baby grows and develops. Responding to your baby's unique feeding needs helps to ensure your breasts make the right amount of milk for your baby.

Rooming-in

This enables you to learn about breastfeeding and your baby's needs, and helps to establish a good milk supply through frequent breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact. You will learn to notice your baby's feeding cues such as waking, licking the lips and mouthing, turning the head from side to side, bringing the hand to the mouth and nuzzling into your breasts.

Breastfeeding: Getting Started



Avoid the use of teats, dummies and supplementary feeds unless there is a medical need.

Your baby is learning how to breastfeed in the first few weeks and this can be affected if baby is given a bottle, teat or dummy at this time. If your baby needs extra feeds for a medical reason, these can be given by 'finger feed' or cup instead of a bottle in most cases. You can discuss the best way to give your baby extra feeds with your midwife.

Offering feeds other than breast milk (such as formula) unless there is a medical need may affect the establishment of your milk supply. If there is a medical need for extra feeds, your own breastmilk is the best choice. Your midwife can teach you how to express and feed your breastmilk to your baby.



Exclusive breastfeeding to 6 months.

Most breastfed babies need no other food or drink other than breastmilk until around 6 months. After solids are introduced, breastfeeding can continue for up to two years and beyond as long as mother and baby want. You can be confident that your baby is receiving enough breastmilk when you see 5 to 6 or more heavy wet nappies, at least one bowel action a day in the early weeks and your baby usually settles after most feeds.

Learning about breastfeeding

A free breastfeeding information session is offered once a month on Wednesdays from 3.00pm to 5.00pm or 6.30 pm to 8.30pm. Bookings can be made through Maternity Outpatients. Partners/support people and grandparents are also encouraged to attend.

Getting Help with Breastfeeding

- Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) 24 hour helpline Ph. 1800686268
- Ballarat Health Service Breastfeeding Service Ph. 0439981937/ 53204977
- Parent Place Breastfeeding Support Cnr. Sturt and Albert Streets, Ballarat Central Ph. 0439981937/ 53206871
Ph 0439981937/ 53206871
- 24 Hour Maternal and Child Health Advice Line Ph.132229.

For more information contact the Breastfeeding Service on 0439981937