

# Breastfeeding

## C O N F I D E N C E



**Don't be concerned if breastfeeding isn't what you expected. Like anything worth doing, it takes practice.**



**Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association**

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Produced by the Australian Breastfeeding Association  
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Breastfeeding Information and Research

National Health and Medical Research Council  
Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012)

2010 Australian National Infant Feeding Survey

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor surveys

*Hi! I'm a new mum to 9-week-old Jessica and I still can't believe how much my life has changed in the last 2 months. I'm now wondering why I was so preoccupied with the birth when it's 'after' that I need help with! Someone to do the cooking, cleaning, washing, grocery shopping and generally running the household would be great. All of those things tend to fall towards the bottom of my list, which is headed by SLEEP!*

*After working full-time outside the home, being at home full-time is a big change and quite a shock. This is coupled with feeling tired and constantly wondering if I am doing this right. Just when I think that I've got things down to a system and that I can predict her every move, she changes.*

*Things are getting easier. Just being able to get out of the house and meet other new mums has been great. To sum up my experience so far — it's nothing like I expected! I just didn't realise how tired I'd feel or that I'd burst into tears for no reason. I also had no idea how happy I'd feel having my beautiful baby fall asleep on the breast, when nothing else in the world matters.*

*I know that new mums are always getting plenty of advice on what to do, but I just wanted to add that there is information and help available on almost every topic to do with babies from sleeping to breastfeeding. JUST ASK!*

*Best of luck,*

*Nicole Lee*

# What should I expect?

- Breastfeeding, while natural, is still a learned skill, at least for the mother. Healthy newborn babies instinctively know what to do if they are placed skin-to-skin on their mother's body straight after birth. Some women breastfeed easily from the first day and never have a problem, but many meet hurdles somewhere along the road.
- After giving birth, a mother is often tired or sleep-deprived and emotional from the hormone changes. It isn't always like those romantic images you had in your head of a mother breastfeeding her baby!
- Don't worry if breastfeeding isn't as you expected at first. Like anything worth doing, it takes time and practice!
- Problems can usually be solved. Help is available.
- As breastfeeding is a practical skill, it helps to have contact with other mothers who are breastfeeding.



# What breastfeeding provides

## Baby

- Breastmilk provides all the food and drink a baby needs for about the first 6 months of life.
- Breastmilk provides resistance to disease via antibodies and other components which fight infections.
- Babies who are not breastfed have an increased risk of:
  - ~ common illnesses such as gastroenteritis, respiratory and ear infections
  - ~ SIDS
  - ~ overweight and obesity
  - ~ lower IQ.

*'I thought breastfeeding would just come naturally. My baby and I had some difficulties with attachment. It took a while for me to feel comfortable and in control again.'*

## Mother

- Breastfeeding protects the mother's health. Mothers who have not breastfed have an increased risk of breast and ovarian cancer.
- Breastfeeding helps the womb return to its pre-pregnant state and aids weight loss.
- Breastfeeding usually delays the return of periods.
- Exclusive breastfeeding can act as a contraceptive.

## Community

- Breastfeeding saves food resources, fuel and energy.
- Non-breastfed babies place greater demands on health care services.
- Breastfeeding is convenient and free, while formula and feeding equipment are costly.
- Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly (no waste, no chemicals).
- Mothers who do not breastfeed have increased health care costs in the long term.
- Mothers of non-breastfed infants often have to take more time off work to care for them.

# How often should I feed my baby?

- Breastfeeding your baby whenever he wants is the key to building a good milk supply and preventing many problems. This means offering your baby the breast whenever he shows signs of hunger during the day and night. It also means letting him finish a feed in his own time and come off the breast by himself.
- Babies vary in their feeding needs. They may need to feed as many as 10-15 times or as few as 6-8 times within 24 hours. Some feed quickly, some feed slowly. Some feed in spurts with rests in between and some seem to feed ‘all the time’!
- You cannot overfeed a breastfed baby. Babies are born with the instinct to know when they have had enough and this matches their bodies’ needs.
- Feeding patterns change. Let your baby lead you.
- Feed according to need!

*‘Just before James turned 6 weeks, there were 3 days where I felt like I was feeding him all the time. I thought I’d never get through it, then suddenly I had a baby who was very content and started to sleep in longer stretches at night — what a bonus!!’*



If you hold your baby skin-to-skin on your chest and let him attach by himself by following his instincts, he will usually breastfeed well.



# How to position your baby for feeding

- When your baby is breastfeeding, it should feel comfortable and should not hurt. Pain is usually a sign that the baby is not on the breast properly.
- When your baby is on your breast the right way:
  - ~ it doesn't hurt
  - ~ your baby has a good mouthful of breast
  - ~ your baby's lips are slightly curled back
  - ~ your baby's chin is well in against your breast
  - ~ your baby's chest is against your chest
  - ~ you may hear your baby swallow
  - ~ your baby's tongue is well forward over the bottom gum and cupping the breast.

**Positioning:** There are many different positions to breastfeed in. There is no 'ideal' position. If it works for you, your baby is getting milk and it is pain-free — go with it!

**Attachment:** Your baby should be able to get a good mouthful of breast easily. His mouth should be wide open, lips should be turned outwards (or flanged) and he is breathing freely.



*'It seemed like Lucy wanted to feed again just after I finished. I read a booklet that explained that Lucy would have fussy periods from time to time, and she would probably ask for more feeds. After a few days she went back to normal'.*

# How do I know if I have enough milk?

Many women worry about how much milk their breastfed baby is getting. Low milk supply is the reason most often given by mothers who have given up breastfeeding. Yet it is very rare for mothers not to be able to produce enough milk. Only a very small number of mothers cannot breastfeed for physical reasons.

Some signs to look for to make sure your baby is getting enough milk:

- Is your baby alert and mostly happy?
- Does your baby feed as many times as he wants and at least 6 times per day?
- Does your baby have at least 6 pale yellow, wet cloth nappies or 5 heavily wet disposable nappies per day?
- Does your baby have regular soft bowel motions?  
Babies under 6 weeks of age usually have at least 3-4 bowel motions in a 24-hour period. Babies older than this may have fewer bowel motions.
- Is your baby gaining weight and starting to fill out his clothes?

There will be some periods of time when your baby seems more fussy and wants to breastfeed more often than usual. You may have heard these times referred to as 'growth spurts' or 'appetite increases'. You may now hear it called a 'wonder week'. It is now known that, after the newborn period, babies do not need increased amounts of milk as they grow bigger. Giving a bottle is not the solution at this time. This can in fact create a problem with your milk supply, because your baby will take less from the breast and this could reduce your milk supply. The best way is to follow your baby's lead and fit in some extra feeds for a couple of days and your baby should soon settle down again.

# Looking after yourself

Many mothers (and fathers) have strong emotions during the first few weeks or months after the birth. Even when well prepared, you can feel overwhelmed from the tiredness, isolation and the hormones swirling through your body. It is important to look after yourself during this time. Some helpful tips are:

- While breastfeeding, your body uses food more efficiently but you may feel hungrier than usual. There is no need for special foods. Choose a variety of healthy foods from the five main food groups.
- Use breastfeeding as a rest time by breastfeeding lying down whenever possible.
- When your baby sleeps, take a nap yourself whenever possible.
- Do only the most basic housework.
- Accept all offers of help!
- Try to avoid seeing too many visitors if you find this tiring. Ask them to get you a drink or help with jobs like washing up or putting the washing on the line.
- Go out of the house and get some fresh air.
- Take some time for yourself alone.
- By caring for yourself you are caring for your baby.
- It can be really helpful to meet other mothers going through the same experiences that you are.





# What's the let-down reflex?

- The let-down reflex is a natural process that occurs with breastfeeding and allows the baby to get all the milk he needs.
- The let-down reflex or milk-ejection makes milk flow – or literally rush – towards the nipple.
- For some mothers the let-down is quite a strong tingly feeling. Many mothers do not feel this, but it does not mean the let-down is not working. Milk may drip from your other breast.
- A good sign is your baby feeding with a rhythm and you can hear him swallowing.
- To encourage your let-down, it helps to be relaxed and comfortable.
- Avoid distractions and focus on your baby. You may even find that over time just hearing your baby cry can cause a let-down!

**The let-down reflex is a natural process that occurs with breastfeeding and is important in making sure that your baby gets all the milk needed.**



# Some tips if you have sore breasts or nipples

- Try different feeding positions.
- After feeding, gently express as much milk as possible from the painful area.
- After feeding, express a little milk onto your nipple and areola and air dry.
- If a duct is blocked, gentle massage from the blockage towards the nipple can help.
- Apply cold packs after feeding if this helps you feel more comfortable.

**Nipple soreness** – mostly occurs in the early days of breastfeeding. This is usually caused by poor attachment of your baby on the breast (continued correct attachment can help heal a sore nipple).

**Blocked duct** – can be a hard painful lump in the breast; the lump may look red and feel tender and you may have a fever (gentle massage, especially in the shower and while feeding, towards the nipple can help clear it).

**Mastitis** – inflammation of the breast which may follow a blocked milk duct or engorgement. The inflamed part of the breast becomes red, hot and painful. You are likely to have a fever and a flu-like feeling. Seek medical advice as soon as possible.





**Ongoing pain is not normal when breastfeeding. If you are feeling pain, ring your local breastfeeding counsellor or the Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 mum to mum (1800 686 268) for more tips.**

# Expressing and storing breastmilk

## Some tips for expressing breastmilk

- Make sure any equipment you use has been thoroughly cleaned and that your hands are washed well.
- Set yourself up in a private and relaxed place. Think about your baby and have a photo to look at to help your let-down reflex work.
- Sit in a comfortable position and be as relaxed as possible.

The two main methods are:

- Hand: this is a skill that is easy to learn, gentle, cost-free and convenient.
- Pump: in hospital you may have used an electric breast pump. If you need one at home there is a range of smaller pumps, hand-operated and electric, that you can buy.

**Note:** You can hire one of the large electric breast pumps. The Australian Breastfeeding Association offers a discount rate on breast pump hire for members.

## Tips for storing breastmilk

- When freezing breastmilk, leave some space at the top of the container (it expands as it freezes).
- Freeze in small amounts to avoid wastage eg 50 mL.
- To defrost frozen milk, either put it in the refrigerator overnight, or place it in a bowl of warm water (not hot) and gently move it about.
- If breastmilk is left standing, the fat will separate and rise to the top. Gently swirl to remix.

# Storage of breastmilk for home use

Breastmilk status	Room temperature (26 °C or lower)	Refrigerator (5 °C or lower)	Freezer
Freshly expressed into container	6-8 hours If refrigeration is available, store milk there	No more than 72 hours Store in back, where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator (-15 °C) 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door (-18 °C) 6-12 months in deep freeze (-20 °C*)
Previously frozen – thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	4 hours or less – that is, until the next feeding	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding	Discard	Discard

\* Chest or upright manual defrost deep freezer that is opened infrequently and maintains ideal temperature

Reproduced with permission from National Health and Medical Research Council 2012, Infant Feeding Guidelines. NHMRC, Canberra p59.



# Getting out and about

Breastfeeding a baby does not mean that you are tied down. In fact it is easier to go out at short notice because you have all your baby's food and drink needs wherever you go!

As a new mother you can feel quite alone and it is important to have some social time just for yourself. Learning to express and store breastmilk is helpful in allowing you to have a break.

**Breastfeeding a baby does not mean that you are tied down.**



# Breastfeeding and work

There is a range of options open to a working mother including:

- expressing at work and feeding the baby expressed breastmilk
- having the child in care nearby or working from home
- giving bottle feeds when she cannot be present and breastfeeding the rest of the time.

Lots of people benefit from a mother combining breastfeeding and work:

- the baby gets sick less often
- the mother can still keep the close bond with her baby and maintain her own long-term health benefits
- the workplace also benefits because a breastfed baby means less time off work for the parents, lower staff turnover, reduced training costs and a positive corporate image.

**For the latest information on breastfeeding friendly workplaces and how to make your transition back to work stress-free visit our website: [breastfeedingfriendly.com.au](http://breastfeedingfriendly.com.au)**

# Your baby's weight

Some mothers worry that their baby is not growing as they expect, or compared with other babies they know. All babies are different. The weight and height charts used by your local child health nurse provide a guide to the overall trend of your baby's health.

It is important not to become too concerned if a baby gains less weight one week as compared to another week. Many other factors contribute to the rate of weight gain, including sickness, the clothes the baby is wearing, whether the scales are the same and your baby's previous growth.

Breastfed babies can have different weight gain patterns from babies fed formula. Remember that weight gain is only one of the things used to assess infant health (speak to your child health nurse if you have any further concerns).

**When assessing your baby's weight, you need to look at all the factors. Has she been sick, what has been her weight trend since birth and what about other things, such as length? Also you need to consider your family history and your build as well as that of your baby's father.**

# Finding out more about breastfeeding

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) has a wealth of information to assist you with breastfeeding. This includes information for mothers with special needs, such as feeding a baby with a cleft palate or feeding triplets! Some resources are available in other languages.

ABA is a non-profit organisation founded in 1964 (as the Nursing Mothers' Association) to encourage and support mothers who would like to breastfeed their babies, while creating in the community an awareness of the importance of human milk.

Most of our work is carried out by trained volunteer counsellors over the phone, online and in the community. ABA is also supported by health authorities and specialists in infant and child health and nutrition. We are recognised internationally as a source of accurate information about breastfeeding management.

You can receive our book *Breastfeeding ... naturally* free (usually \$34.95) when you become a member.



# About ABA

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is one of Australia's largest non-profit women's organisations. There are around 230 ABA groups nationwide and 800 trained breastfeeding counsellors. Over 200,000 Australians have been members of the Association at some time since its beginning.

## Products and services

ABA offers a range of services to help you, including:

### Breastfeeding Helpline

Our 24-hour Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 268) is toll-free\* and available for everyone. Trained, volunteer breastfeeding counsellors answer calls on a roster system.

\* Calls from a mobile phone may incur charges

### Membership

While many of ABA's services are available free of charge, members benefit by having access to the complete range of ABA resources and services such as a breastfeeding book, email counselling service, bi-monthly magazine, monthly eNewsletters, shopping and breast pump hire discounts and unlimited local group attendance.

### Local support groups

There are about 230 local ABA groups around Australia. You can come along to make new friends, have your questions answered and share experiences. Everyone is welcome.



**Website:** [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

ABA has a comprehensive website with breastfeeding information, news, email counselling and a forum where you can chat to other mothers.

## Publications

ABA publishes lots of information about breastfeeding including booklets on specific topics such as increasing your milk supply, expressing breastmilk and breastfeeding after a caesarean birth.

## Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces program provides workplaces with assistance to support mums who return to work.

The website: [www.breastfeedingfriendly.com.au](http://www.breastfeedingfriendly.com.au) also has tips on talking to your employer about your return to work.

## Retail stores

Mothers Direct is the retail subsidiary of ABA and provides useful, quality products for breastfeeding and early parenting. You can shop in-store in Melbourne or Brisbane, or online 24-hours.

**Melbourne:** 1818-1822 Malvern Road, East Malvern  
9 am-5 pm Mon-Fri, 11 am-3 pm Sat • P: 03 9805 5501

**Brisbane:** 2A/26 Eva Street, Coorparoo  
9 am-5 pm Mon-Fri, 10 am-3.30 pm Sat • P: 07 3847 5187

**Online store:** [www.mothersdirect.com.au](http://www.mothersdirect.com.au)

**Customer service/telephone orders:** 1800 032 926

# Become a member

Becoming a member of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) can help you gain confidence in breastfeeding and parenting. Whether you are fully breastfeeding, partially breastfeeding or expressing, you can benefit from the complete range of ABA resources and services.

In addition to the complimentary services ABA offers, membership has many extra benefits:

**Book.** Usually \$34.95, new members receive a complimentary copy of our book *Breastfeeding ... naturally* which covers topics from preparing for breastfeeding, to solving problems and managing the changing needs of your growing baby.

**Breastfeeding Education Classes.** Designed for expectant parents, these members-only classes are presented by trained breastfeeding counsellors or educators. Gain up-to-date and practical information so you can be fully prepared.

**Magazine.** Share in the stories of other mums and gain up-to-date information on a range of breastfeeding and early parenting topics. Your copy of *Essence* magazine will be mailed to you every 2 months.

**Email counselling.** Have your questions answered with exclusive members-only email counselling from our trained breastfeeding counsellors.

**Local support groups.** You are not in this alone! Meet new friends and have your questions answered at local get-togethers run by trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors or educators. Members receive unlimited access to groups anywhere in Australia.

**eNewsletter.** Have the latest news, information and special offers from the Australian Breastfeeding Association emailed directly to you every month.

**Mothers Direct discount.** Save money on everything you need for breastfeeding and expressing with a 10% discount from our retail subsidiary, Mothers Direct.

**Everyday shopping discounts.** It can be challenging balancing the budget with a young family. With our My Savings program you can save where it counts – on items like food, groceries and fuel (as well as things like gifts, travel and movie tickets).

**Half-price breast pump hire.** Save 50% on breast pump hire and get the most out of expressing by receiving help from a trained breast pump hiring officer.

**Exclusive access to My ABA.** Gain access to extra content and members-only articles through a password protected section of our website called My ABA. You will also be able to access back issues of our member magazine *Essence*.

**Join ABA now online at  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)  
or call 03 9885 0855**

**You are joining the ABA family! As a not-for-profit organisation, the Australian Breastfeeding Association is funded primarily by membership. Your membership enables us to continue our services in supporting and educating parents, health professionals and the community about breastfeeding.**



# Australian Breastfeeding Association

## Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 mum 2 mum

### 1800 686 268

*The National Breastfeeding Helpline is supported by  
funding from the Australian Government.*

#### Contact Us:

##### National Head Office

1818-1822 Malvern Road, East Malvern VIC 3145

PO Box 4000, Glen Iris VIC 3146

T: 1800 686 268 (Breastfeeding Helpline)

T: 03 9885 0855 (General Enquiries/Administration)

F: 03 9885 0866

E: [info@breastfeeding.asn.au](mailto:info@breastfeeding.asn.au)

W: [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

#### YOUR PRIVACY IS IMPORTANT TO US

The Australian Breastfeeding Association collects names, addresses and payment information for the purpose of providing Association services. Your personal details will not be given to any other party unless legally required to do so. Our privacy policy can be viewed at: [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au) or obtained by calling 03 9885 0855 during business hours. Your personal details may be used for internal fundraising purposes.

Should you prefer not to receive these requests, please contact us.