



Australian
Breastfeeding
Association

Breastfeeding: what to expect



breastfeeding.asn.au



**Welcome to your guide to getting
breastfeeding started with the Australian
Breastfeeding Association (ABA).**

The early days of feeding a new baby can bring lots of questions. Breastfeeding is something you and your baby learn together. When breastfeeding is new, you may feel unsure about getting started.

You don't have to work it out on your own.

We're here to support you with friendly, evidence-based information and mother-to-mother support whenever you need it.

Access ABA's support and information



**Free 24/7 National Breastfeeding
Helpline: 1800 686 268**



**LiveChat with trained
breastfeeding educators**



Education classes before baby arrives



**Online step-by-step guide
for the first 72 hours**



**Weekly live-stream webinars
during the newborn weeks**



mum2mum app



ABA's website: *breastfeeding.asn.au*

**Free info toolkit
aba.asn.au/free**



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Making breastmilk for your baby

Your breasts start making milk during pregnancy. The first milk your breasts make is called colostrum. Colostrum is made in very small amounts and is all your baby needs in the early days. Newborn babies have tiny tummies and feed very often. When milk is removed from your breasts, your body gets the message to make more. This continues for as long as you breastfeed or express milk.

After about 2 to 5 days, you may notice your breasts feel fuller as you begin to make more milk. Some people call this your 'milk coming in'. As your milk volume increases, colostrum slowly changes to mature milk which is thinner and bluish white in colour.

If your baby isn't feeding at the breast, hand expression or breast pumps can be used to help build and protect your supply. We can support you if you are in this situation.

**Expressing for
your newborn**

aba.asn.au/expressing-newborn



Beginning breastfeeding

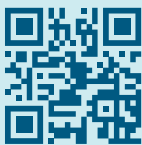
When you and your baby feel comfortable and relaxed, feeding is more enjoyable and your milk flows more easily.

Your baby is born with instincts to find your breast, latch and suck. Holding your baby soon after birth with their skin in contact with yours ('skin-to-skin') will help them to do this. Skin-to-skin contact can also help release milk-making hormones and calm your baby.

Holding and breastfeeding your baby

There's no one 'right' way to breastfeed your baby. You can sit, lean back, or lie down. What matters most is that you're both comfortable. Having baby unwrapped and able to move their hands and body will help them to feed well. Breastfeeding can take time, and holding your baby close is easier when your back, shoulders and arms are well supported. A comfortable chair, pillows and other supports can all help.

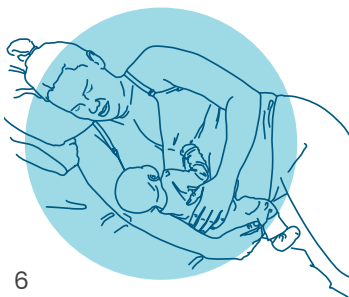
You can also guide baby to your breast by holding them close against your body so they're facing you and can reach the breast easily.



Education
[aba.asn.au/
classes](http://aba.asn.au/classes)

Your baby needs to be held very close to you to breastfeed. When they are attached and feeding well, their head will be in line with your breast.

Attend a breastfeeding class before your baby arrives to learn more.



Supporting your baby's attachment (latch) to your breast

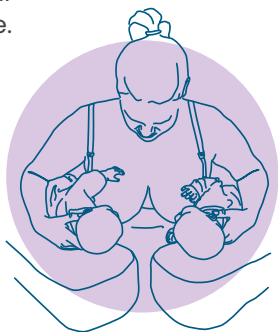
To attach to your breast, your baby needs to open their mouth wide, like a yawn, and take in a good mouthful of nipple and breast. With a deep latch, your nipple will sit comfortably reaching the back of your baby's mouth.

Signs you might notice when your baby is attached well

- ✓ Your baby's whole body is facing yours.
- ✓ Their head, neck and hips are in a straight line.
- ✓ Their head is gently tipped back.
- ✓ Their chin rests into your breast and their nose is clear.
- ✓ They have a mouthful of breast, not just the nipple.
- ✓ Their lips are visible, not sucked in.

Breastfeeding should feel comfortable for you and your baby. In the early days, you may feel some discomfort when your baby first attaches. If pain continues, or you hear clicking sounds, gently take your baby off your breast and try again.

If it still doesn't feel right, ask your healthcare provider for support or call the Breastfeeding Helpline.



How to know your baby is getting your milk

Understanding milk flow (let-down reflex)

Milk begins to flow when your baby feeds and stimulates the nipple. This is called the let-down reflex. When you feel relaxed and comfortable, your milk will flow without you being aware of it. Expressing by hand or pump can also trigger this reflex.

You'll know when your milk begins to flow because your baby's feeding will change from a quick, light suck to a slower, sucking and swallowing pattern. The pain and discomfort experienced after childbirth can slow down the let-down reflex.

In the very early days, while your body is making colostrum, you may not notice your let-down reflex. Once your milk volume increases, around days 2 to 5, this becomes easier to notice.

Some mums feel tingling, warmth, fullness, or see milk dripping from the other breast. Many feel nothing at all. This doesn't mean the milk isn't flowing.



Visit our website and *The first 72 hours* resource to learn more about the let-down reflex and how to manage any discomfort.

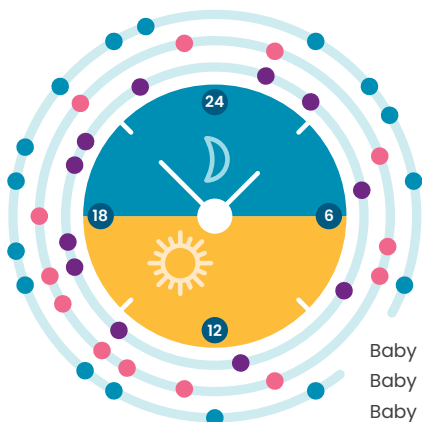
**The first
72 hours**

[aba.asn.au/
first72hours](http://aba.asn.au/first72hours)



How often babies feed

Newborn babies usually feed 8 to 14 times or more over 24 hours, day and night. There's no set pattern. Many babies feed more often in the late afternoon or early evening. Babies 1, 2 and 3 are examples of how often newborn babies feed.



Frequent feeding helps your milk supply meet your baby's needs and can help prevent breastfeeding issues.

You can follow your baby's lead and wait until they finish feeding before offering your other breast. Your baby may not feed from both breasts every time and that's okay.

Babies show us signs when they want to feed. These signs are often called feeding cues.



Baby's sleep

Most babies don't have predictable sleeping patterns and night waking is expected.

Babies spend a lot of time in light sleep, which means they wake easily. This is important for their development. Night feeds also help your baby get enough milk and support your supply.

Babies show us signs when they are ready for sleep. Over time, you will begin to recognise your baby's sleep cues.

Adjusting to broken sleep when caring for a baby is not easy. Breastfeeding releases hormones that can help you relax and fall back to sleep more easily.

Find more information and tips on baby sleep and night-time parenting on our website.



**Baby
sleep
patterns**

[aba.asn.au/
sleep](http://aba.asn.au/sleep)

Signs your baby is getting enough breastmilk

It's common to wonder if your baby is getting enough breastmilk.

Even though you can't measure how much milk your baby drinks, there are some reliable signs that can help you.

From **day 5**, these reliable signs include:

- ✓ plenty of wet nappies each day (at least 5 disposable nappies or 6 cloth nappies in 24 hours)
- ✓ pale-coloured wee with little smell
- ✓ regular soft yellow poos (at least 3 a day in the first 6 to 8 weeks)
- ✓ steady growth in weight, length and head size
- ✓ good muscle tone and healthy skin
- ✓ baby being alert when awake, with some settled periods between feeds.

Still wondering about supply? We have more information on our website and a Newborn Virtual Village webinar focused on working out your supply in the early days.

Is my baby getting enough breastmilk?

aba.asn.au/enough



Your baby's growth

Your baby's weight, length and head size can help show how they're growing. Growth charts provide a general guide, but all babies grow at their own pace. Breastfed and formula-fed babies also have different growth patterns.

It's common for babies to lose some weight after birth. They usually regain it over the next couple of weeks if they breastfeed often and well.

Sometimes babies may not show the weight gain you expect at a check-up. This can be due to things like clothing, the scales used, or whether your baby has just fed.

If you have concerns about your baby's growth, talk with your child health nurse or other healthcare provider.

Visit our website to learn more.



Weight gains

aba.asn.au/weight

Fussy baby?



All babies have fussy times and may want to feed more often. It doesn't mean your baby isn't getting enough milk.

Following your baby's lead, holding them, or feeding for comfort won't spoil them.

These fussy times settle for most babies after a few days.

Breastfeeding concerns and issues

You can prevent and resolve most breastfeeding concerns and issues by following these four tips:

1

Hold your baby close to you and check they have a large mouthful of breast.

2

Feed your baby often (8 to 14 times or more in 24 hours), including at night, for as long as they need.

3

Avoid delaying feeds or stretching out the time between feeds.

4

Follow your baby's lead so they can finish feeding in their own time.

Tips for specific concerns and issues

Concerns about milk supply

**Is my breastmilk good enough for my baby?
Am I making enough?**

It's very common to have these questions but you can feel confident your milk is right for your baby.

- ✓ It can take around 6 weeks for your milk supply to settle to match your baby's needs.
- ✓ Checking the signs on page 11 can help you to know if your baby is getting enough milk.
- ✓ Breastfeeding (or expressing) more often helps your body make more milk. This may be as many as 14 or more times in 24 hours.

When there seems to be too much milk

Some mums feel they have more milk than their baby needs. This may be a concern if your baby is gaining weight very quickly and has lots of wet nappies and poos each day.

You might find it helps to:

- ✓ feed from one breast at each feed for a few days
- ✓ express just enough for comfort on the other side
- ✓ avoid expressing more than needed or using a milk catcher.

Sore nipples

Some nipple tenderness or discomfort can happen, especially in the early days.

To help, follow the four tips on page 13 plus:

- ✓ gently hand express a small amount of milk before a feed to help start your milk flow
- ✓ rub a small amount of breastmilk onto your nipple and areola after a feed and let it dry
- ✓ hold a warm, damp cloth on your nipple between feeds if this feels soothing.

When to get support

Ongoing pain isn't something you need to manage on your own.

If feeding is painful, or something doesn't feel right, call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **1800 686 268** for further support.

For more information, search for the concern you have on our website: **breastfeeding.asn.au**

Engorgement

In the first week or so after birth, some mums find their breasts become very full, firm and uncomfortable. If your baby finds it hard to latch, follow the four tips on page 13 plus:

- ✓ hand express to reduce breast tightness or use reverse pressure softening – information on this is available on our website
- ✓ use relaxation methods, apply gentle warmth or gently stroke your breasts to help your milk flow
- ✓ after breastfeeding, use cool packs to help with inflammation.

Localised breast inflammation (including mastitis)

If part of your breast becomes tender, lumpy or red, it can help to follow the four tips on page 13 plus:

- ✓ continue breastfeeding or expressing milk regularly
- ✓ use warmth just before feeding and cool packs after feeding
- ✓ rest when you can
- ✓ use anti-inflammatory medication if needed.

If you start to feel unwell, or don't begin to feel better within 24 hours, see your doctor or healthcare provider.

Expressing and storing breastmilk

Breastmilk can be expressed by hand or with a pump.

Hand expressing is gentle, needs no equipment, and can be done anywhere.

Breast pumps come in many styles, from hospital-grade pumps for hire to portable pumps for personal use.

Helpful tips for expressing

- ✓ Wash your hands and keep equipment clean.
- ✓ Choose a comfortable, private space. Your milk will flow more easily when you feel safe and relaxed.
- ✓ Thinking about your baby or looking at a photo can help milk flow.

Storing expressed breastmilk

- ✓ Leave space in the container if you're freezing your milk. It will expand as it freezes.
- ✓ Freeze in small amounts to avoid waste, for example, 50 mL.
- ✓ Thaw frozen milk gently in the fridge or in a bowl of warm water.
- ✓ Swirl milk gently if the fat separates.



Download our leaflet
on using an electric
breast pump

aba.asn.au/electric-pump-tips

Storage of breastmilk for home use

	Room temperature 26°C or lower	Fridge 5°C or lower	Freezer
Freshly expressed breastmilk	6 to 8 hours If refrigeration is available, store milk there	72 hours Store at the back, where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside fridge -15°C 3 months in freezer section of fridge with separate door -18°C 6 to 12 months in deep freeze* -20°C
Previously frozen breastmilk – thawed in fridge but not yet warmed	Until the next feed (no more than 4 hours)	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Previously frozen breastmilk – thawed outside fridge and/or warmed	Only for completion of feeding, then discard	Until the next feed (no more than 4 hours)	Do not refreeze
Baby has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding, then discard	Discard	Discard

*Chest/upright manual defrost deep freezer that is opened infrequently and keeps temperature.

Adapted from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012).

ABA offers information on using breast pumps and a discount on breast pump hire for Virtual Village members.

Visit
aba.asn.au/using-pump
for details.

Planning ahead for work and breastfeeding

There are many ways to combine work and breastfeeding. There's no 'right' way, and every family and workplace is different.

Some mums breastfeed when they're with their baby and express at work. Others explore options like flexible work hours, working from home, or having their baby nearby for convenient feeds.

Planning ahead can make the transition easier. It may feel unfamiliar at first, and that's okay. Adjusting to a new routine takes time.

Support, information and practical ideas are available when you're ready to think about this stage.



Going back to work

aba.asn.au/work



Your wellbeing after birth

Giving birth and caring for a newborn can bring about many changes in your body, feelings and daily life. It will take time to adjust to these changes.

Having support from family, friends and others you trust will help you during this time.

ABA offers practical resources and connection during the early days and weeks.

Newborn Virtual Village: Wellbeing for new mums

aba.asn.au/village



Gentle ways to care for yourself include:

- ✓ resting when you can
- ✓ focusing on what matters most
- ✓ letting others know what you need and accepting help
- ✓ eating when you're hungry
- ✓ getting outside for some movement and fresh air
- ✓ staying connected with others.

Support people can help by bringing meals, caring for your baby, listening, encouraging you, and helping with everyday tasks.

Visit our webpage for more ideas on how those around you can support you.

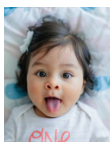
Partners and families

aba.asn.au/supporters



Breastfeeding supports you and your baby now and into the future

Breastfeeding supports both you and your baby in many ways, now and into the future. Your breastmilk is made especially for your baby. It provides the food and fluids they need in the early months and changes as they grow.



Breastfeeding – for a healthy baby and mum

aba.asn.au/health

For you

Breastfeeding can support your health and make caring for your baby easier in everyday life.

Mums who breastfeed:

- ✓ have a lower chance of some health conditions later in life, including breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke
- ✓ can feed and comfort their baby at anytime and anywhere
- ✓ may spend less money on feeding equipment, formula and healthcare
- ✓ may notice their periods take longer to return when fully breastfeeding (this can be used as a form of birth control in certain situations during the first 6 months).



For your baby

Breastmilk gives your baby everything they need for around the first 6 months and continues to support their growth and development as they get older.

Babies who receive breastmilk:

- ✓ have food and fluids that are clean, safe and always ready when they need them
- ✓ have greater protection against common illnesses such as gut, chest and ear infections
- ✓ have a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- ✓ are less likely to develop some health concerns later in life, such as type 2 diabetes or becoming overweight
- ✓ for premature babies, have protection against serious conditions such as necrotising enterocolitis (NEC) and infections.

**We can support
you to achieve your
breastfeeding goals.**

**ABA is Australia's leading
authority for breastfeeding
support, education and advocacy.**

**For over 60 years, ABA has
supported families with practical,
evidence-based breastfeeding
information and peer support.**

**Become a Virtual Village member and
access a world of online support and
resources for breastfeeding and parenting.**

**ABA Virtual Village meets you where
you're at. Connect from hospital,
the office or the comfort of your home.**

Connection and convenience

- online sessions • exclusive discounts
- personalised app notifications
- local meet-ups • member-only resources.



**Find out more and
become a member**

aba.asn.au/access

Attend a breastfeeding class
before your baby arrives.

Education
aba.asn.au/classes



Connect with other mums with newborns
in ABA's **Newborn Virtual Village**.

**Find your
virtual village**
aba.asn.au/village



When you feel ready, connect and
get support at your **local ABA group**.

**Find your
in-person village**
aba.asn.au/local



Access *Breastfeeding: a practical guide*
and other ABA resources.

ABA marketplace
aba.asn.au/shop



Australian Breastfeeding Association
National Support Office
PO Box 33221, Melbourne VIC 3004

1800 686 268 *Breastfeeding Helpline*
(03) 9690 4620 *General enquiries/administration*
email info@breastfeeding.asn.au web breastfeeding.asn.au

The information in this booklet is based on information
found on our website and in other ABA resources.
Refer to the individual resources for a full list of references.

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Australian
Breastfeeding
Association

1800 686 268

Need breastfeeding support now?



1800mum2mum

Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268

ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline is available
24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



Get help
aba.asn.au/help

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