

Patient information factsheet

Giving your baby additional milk to support breastfeeding

This factsheet aims to help you decide whether your baby needs additional milk and if so, what your options are. We hope it helps you to make an informed decision and answers some of your questions. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife or the maternity infant feeding team.

Is my baby getting enough milk?

Breastfeeding is a skill that you and your baby learn together, and it can take you both time. While you are learning to breastfeed, it is extremely common to wonder whether your baby is getting enough milk. For example, you may be concerned your baby isn't getting enough milk if:

- they don't seem to settle
- they want to feed frequently (especially at night)
- they aren't interested in feeding for the first couple of days after being born
- you feel as though you haven't got enough milk

All these things don't necessarily mean your baby isn't getting enough milk. In fact:

- most babies are often unsettled and need to be close to you when they are first born. This is normal and helps them to know they are safe and secure.
- most babies will want to feed very frequently at night when your milk-making hormone is at its highest level (this hormone peaks between 1am and 5am). This stimulation at nighttime helps your body to produce plenty of milk for your baby in the weeks to come.
- for the first few days, your breasts will only produce a small amount of concentrated milk (known as colostrum), as this is usually all your baby needs. It is normal to not feel colostrum in your breasts.
- in the first 24 hours after birth, it is common for babies to feed infrequently. During this time, it is important that you have lots of skin-to-skin contact and give your baby regular drops of colostrum. Your midwife will keep a close eye on your baby's wellbeing until they start to feed more frequently.
- your baby's feeding will usually increase after the first 24 to 48 hours, where they should have at least 8 feeds in 24 hours. After a few days of frequent, effective feeds and close contact with your baby, your breasts will start to produce more milk and your baby's need for milk will also increase.

To check whether your baby is getting enough milk, please speak to your midwife or visit:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/breastfeeding-problems/enough-milk

When may my baby need additional milk?

Although your breast milk contains all the nutrients your baby needs for the first six months of their life, there are some circumstances when a healthcare professional may advise you to give your baby some additional milk. For example, if:

- your baby was born early (premature babies usually take a longer time to feed effectively from the breast)
- your baby is unwell
- your baby is finding it difficult to latch (attach to your breast for a feed) and/or has a poor sucking reflex
- your baby is at risk from hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)
- your baby has lost more weight than usual after birth or is showing signs of dehydration (when your body loses more fluid than you take in)
- you were unwell after giving birth and it affected your milk supply or your ability to breastfeed

What milk options are available?

In the first instance, we recommend that you use your own expressed breast milk as additional milk. However, if you have been advised to give your baby a greater amount of milk than you are able to produce at that time, you can give your baby an alternative milk alongside your breast milk until your milk supply increases. Alternative milk options include:

- donated breast milk
- formula milk

In the table on the next page, we have outlined the benefits and risks of each of these alternative milk options.

Formula milk	Donated breast milk
<p>Formula milk is very different to your breast milk, and it is made from cow's milk, so there are some differences and risks to be aware of.</p>	<p>Here at University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, we have a human milk bank. The milk bank stores breast milk that has been kindly donated by breastfeeding mothers to help those experiencing challenges in the early days. Your midwife or nurse can check to see if there is donated breast milk available for use during your stay in hospital.</p> <p>Donated breast milk must meet certain criteria before it is deemed safe and accepted by our milk bank. For example, we will test the blood of those donating their milk and we will also test the donated milk for bacteria and heat it (process of pasteurisation) to make sure it is safe to give to your baby.</p>
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is readily available. • It contains essential nutrients for a growing baby, including fats, proteins and carbohydrates. • It can be used as an additional source of food and fluid (if clinically needed). 	<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is readily available. • It is healthier than formula milk. • It contains essential nutrients for a growing baby, including fats, proteins and carbohydrates. • It can be used as an additional source of food and fluid (if clinically needed). • It contains high amounts of anti-infective cells to reduce your baby's risk of infections, including stomach, chest and ear infections. • It helps to strengthen your baby's immune system. • It is more easily digested than formula milk.
<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacing a breastfeed with formula milk can impact your own milk production if you don't express your own milk. • If formula milk is given via a bottle, a baby may experience nipple-teat confusion (when a baby has difficulty switching between a bottle teat and a breast). • It can increase a baby's chance of developing allergies, including cow's milk protein allergy (CMPA). • It can increase a baby's risk of tummy infections. Babies have a lower gut pH level (this means that their gut is more acidic) during their first six weeks of life to help reduce harmful germs in their gut. Formula milk alters the natural environment in a baby's tummy and affects the friendly bacteria in their gut. • It takes longer to break down in a baby's gut in comparison to breast milk. This makes babies feel fuller for longer and less interested in feeding. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacing a breastfeed with donor milk can impact your own milk production if you don't express your own milk. • If donor milk is given via a bottle, a baby may experience nipple-teat confusion (when a baby has difficulty switching between a bottle teat and a breast).

How much additional milk should I give my baby?

The healthcare team caring for your baby will review how much milk you should offer your baby and how often they need additional milk. This will vary depending on the age of your baby, their wellbeing and how effectively they are breastfeeding at that time.

How should I give my baby additional milk?

You can give your baby extra milk using the following feeding methods:

- syringe feeding
- spoon feeding
- cup feeding
- bottle feeding

The method you choose will usually depend on the amount of milk you are giving your baby. For more information about these feeding methods, please speak to your midwife or nurse. You can also read our 'Alternative methods of feeding your baby' factsheet to find out more: www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Pregnancyandbirth/Alternative-methods-of-feeding-your-baby-3008-PIL.pdf

What can I do to maintain or improve my milk supply while I give my baby additional milk?

To maintain or improve your own milk supply:

- offer your breast alongside giving your baby additional milk to encourage them to breastfeed
- have skin-to-skin contact as much as possible
- express your milk frequently (at least 8 times in 24 hours) by hand or using a breast pump

For help with increasing your milk supply, please speak to your midwife or the infant feeding team or visit: www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-challenges/milk-supply

For more information about expressing breast milk for your baby, please visit: www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Neonatal/Expressing-breast-milk-for-your-baby-3251-PIL.pdf

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about giving your baby additional milk, please contact:

Maternity infant feeding team

Telephone: **07786 267584**

If the team are unable to answer your call, please leave a voicemail with your name, number and a short message, and a member of the team will aim to contact you within 48 hours.

Community midwifery co-ordinator

Telephone: **023 8120 4871** (every day, 8am to 5pm)

Broadlands birth centre

Telephone: **023 8120 6012** (out of hours)

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Useful links

Global Health Media Project

Is Your Baby Getting Enough Milk video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LX1fl8NtTuw

Expressing the first milk video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=85l3rpsjyC4

First Steps Nutrition Trust

www.firststepsnutrition.org

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**