



Breastfeeding A good start in life.

An information leaflet on breastfeeding your baby.

Every Breastfeed Makes a Difference.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



“When I was pregnant I thought about breastfeeding but I wasn’t sure if it was right for me. I wondered if I’d be able to make enough milk. It turns out that nearly all mothers can make enough milk for their babies and can feed as long as they want to. My son is growing so well now.”

Contents

Introduction	3
After your baby is born	4
Feeding cues	5
Feeding in the early days	6
Finding a comfortable position	8
Attaching your baby to your breast	11
Signs that your baby is feeding well	12
Tips if your breasts feel very full	13
Knowing your baby is getting enough	14
The first few weeks at home	15
Breastfeeding out and about	17
Expressing your milk	18
How to express by hand	19
Good health begins with breastfeeding	21
Breastfeeding support	22
Breastfeeding support groups	23
Every breastfeed makes a difference	24



Congratulations and welcome to motherhood

More and more mums in Ireland breastfeed their babies. Having good information about breastfeeding can help you and your baby get you off to a good start and the right support will help you to keep going.

Your milk is uniquely made for your growing baby's needs.

It helps protect your baby from infection and other illnesses. It is important for your baby's healthy growth and development. As a mum it also reduces your chances of getting some illnesses later in life. The longer you breastfeed the greater the health protection for you and your baby. Breastfeeding is also convenient and cost-free, and mums enjoy the feeling of closeness breastfeeding creates.

This booklet will give you information on what to expect and some useful tips to help you, and remember, you are not alone – help and support is available.

Almost all mums can breastfeed and make enough milk if their baby is feeding often enough; no matter what size the baby or the breast.

In this booklet the baby is referred to as a 'he' because mum is always 'she'!

Your breastmilk gives your baby all the nutrients he needs for around the first six months of life. Your milk continues to be an important part of his diet, as other foods are given, for up to two years of age and beyond.

After your baby is born

Holding your baby with his skin next to your skin immediately after birth will calm and relax you and your baby. Your scent is familiar and comforts him.

Skin to skin contact after birth will:

- **Keep your baby warm**
- **Help to regulate your baby's breathing and heartbeat**
- **Help your baby to start feeding**



www.kangaroomothercare.com,
Photo used with permission

After a rest on your chest, most babies will make movements towards the breast. Babies are smart and know what nature made for them. If your baby has his first feed soon after he is born, with no rush, it makes other feeds easier.

You can keep cuddling skin-to-skin after you leave the delivery room and hospital – your baby will stay warm and comfortable on your chest and the benefits for bonding, soothing and breastfeeding are likely to continue well after birth.

Dads can cuddle skin-to-skin too. In fact dads can do almost everything that mothers do. They can cuddle baby, change nappies and bathe him, talk and play with him. All these activities help dad and baby bond.

Feeding cues

The first few days are about getting to know your baby. As you get to know your baby, you will start to notice his early feeding cues:

- **Eyes fluttering, before they even open**
- **Moving his hands to his mouth**
- **Making mouth movements**
- **Moving towards your breast, or turning his head when you touch his cheek (this is also called rooting)**

It is best to feed your baby when he shows any of these early feeding cues.



Crying is a late sign of hunger

By learning to recognise early feeding cues you will be able to respond to your baby and begin to feed when you are both calm and relaxed.

Dummies or soothers

It's better not to give dummies or soothers in the first few weeks. They can hide the signs that your baby is looking for a feed. Babies who have a dummy may find it difficult to attach to your breast.

Feeding in the early days

You will find that your baby feeds often in the early days. This helps him learn to feed and you to make milk to meet his needs. When you hold your baby close it encourages him to feed. In the early days your baby should feed eight to twelve times a day. Keeping your baby with you helps you to respond to his feeding cues.



Colostrum is the first milk you make

Your baby will only take a small amount of colostrum at each feed. That is a perfect amount for his age and size. Your baby has a tiny stomach now so he may spend more time at your breast.

Building a good milk supply

Day two to four are often very busy days and nights. Your baby wakes up more and your milk supply is increasing. Some feeds may take longer than others and some can be close together. Some babies feed a lot in the evening. It can help to know that this is normal and gets easier over time.

Most mums' milk will increase around days three to five. In the next few weeks your baby may develop a more regular feeding pattern, though there may be some days when he wants to feed a lot.

The early days of frequent feeding are important to help you build a good milk supply. Breastmilk meets all your baby's needs for food and drink for the first six months.

Remember you need to take care of yourself too. It can help to rest when your baby sleeps. Dad and other family members can help in practical ways with caring for baby, cooking, housework and minding older children.

“Coming home with my baby was a busy time. From six in the evening he fed really often. I just went with it, got comfortable and used it as a time to relax with him.”



Vitamin D

All babies in Ireland need vitamin D₃ supplements. They do not get enough from their food (breastmilk, formula milk or solid food). You should give your baby 5 micrograms (5µg) of vitamin D₃ every day for the first year. The vitamin D₃ product you use should be in a liquid form suitable for infants and contain only vitamin D₃.

Finding a comfortable position

There are lots of different positions that mums use to feed their babies – you will find what works best for you and your baby. There are very few rules about how to hold your baby when breastfeeding.

It is worth getting comfortable before a feed. When your baby is showing signs of being ready to feed and is held near your breast in a comfortable position he is likely to take your breast easily.

- **Hold your baby close – he should be able to reach your breast easily without having to twist his head.**
- **He should be able to tilt his head back easily.**
- **Support his neck, shoulders and back.**
- **Some babies like their feet to be supported too.**



Before feeding your baby may bob his head around as he figures out where your breast is. This is all part of the process and you don't need to rush him.

Many mums find it relaxing and comfortable to feed their babies lying back, supported by pillow or cushions. This way your body supports your baby. You have a free hand to stroke and help your baby. This position is also called laid back breastfeeding. For more information visit www.biologicalnurturing.com.



Breastfeeding lying down can be very comfortable. It is especially good for night feeds as you can rest while your baby feeds.



Cuidiú, used with permission



When breastfeeding sitting up, it can help to make sure your back and legs are supported. Some mums like to use a pillow under their elbow for support.

Some mums find it comfortable to move their hips and bottom towards the front of their chair and lean back, this way your body helps to support your baby.

Attaching your baby to your breast

Think 'nose to nipple' - it helps your baby get to the breast when your nipple is between his upper lip and nose.



When his chin touches the breast first, he tilts his head back and opens his mouth wide.



Then he can snuggle up close and feed well. If his nose appears blocked, just move his bottom in closer to you.



www.cwgenna.com, used with permission

Signs that your baby is feeding well

You should feel comfortable during the feed. In the early days you may feel some discomfort or soreness at the beginning a feed and this should fade. If feeding continues to hurt, take your baby off the breast and attach again.

To take your baby off the breast, do this gently by inserting your little finger into the corner of his mouth and gently moving his mouth away from your breast.

If soreness continues after you've tried to reattach your baby, contact your midwife, public health nurse, lactation consultant or breastfeeding counsellor for help and advice.

You know your baby is feeding well when:

- **His mouth is wide open, his chin is touching your breast and he has a good mouthful of breast.**
- **His cheeks are full and rounded.**
- **His jaw is moving, up near his ears.**
- **He starts with short sucks then changes to long deep sucks with pauses**
- **You should hear swallowing, not smacking or clicking sounds.**
- **He should appear alert when awake, and settle and sleep some times during the 24 hours.**
- **He is having plenty of wet and dirty nappies**

Once your baby is finished on one breast, offer the other. If he is not interested, you can start with that breast at the next feed. Some babies will take from both breasts at a feed. Some babies will take little breaks when feeding, going on and off the same breast.

Let your baby decide when he has had enough, when he is finished feeding he will come off the breast by himself.

Tips if your breasts feel very full

Mums may feel their breasts becoming full and uncomfortable in the early days. Feeding your baby will ease the feeling of fullness. The more often you feed the more comfortable you will be.

If your breasts feel uncomfortable or are too hard for your baby to attach, warm your breasts with a warm moist wet face cloth or in the shower. This will help your milk to flow. Hand expressing some milk before the feed can also help.



If you feed often in the early days and your baby is well attached it will help you to get off to a good start.

If you have any concerns, are experiencing difficulties or feel you need more help or advice, contact your midwife, public health nurse or local breastfeeding support (see page 22).

Knowing your baby is getting enough

What comes out must have gone in! You don't need to see how much milk your baby takes to know he is getting enough. His nappy will help you.

The first dirty nappies your baby has are black and tarry. This is called meconium. The colostrum that your baby takes helps him to pass the meconium. As your baby has more breastfeeds, his dirty nappies will turn greenish in colour, and by day five should look yellow and seedy. If, from Day 5, your baby has yellow seedy dirty nappies 2-3 times a day and six very wet nappies he is getting enough milk. After a few weeks some babies will have fewer dirty nappies.

24 hour period	Wet Nappies	Dirty Nappies
Day one to two	1-2 or more	1 or more, black & tarry (meconium)
Day three to four	3 or more, heavier	2 or more, greenish
Day five	5-6 or more, heavy	2 or more, yellow and seedy
Day seven+	6 or more, heavy	2 or more, yellow and seedy

Babies lose some weight in the first day or two as they get rid of extra fluid. After this they gain weight steadily and are back to their birth weight around day 14. Some babies may take up to 3 weeks to get back to their birth weight. If you have questions about your baby's weight speak to your public health nurse.

The first few weeks at home

The first few weeks after having a baby can be tiring. Your body is recovering from birth and you are busy looking after your new baby. Family and friends can help with everyday tasks.

“I had my sister around for the first week after Mia was born. It was great, she helped with the cooking and cleaning so I could rest and spend time with Mia. It was the best breastfeeding support I could’ve asked for!”

Getting as much rest as possible will help. This may mean going to bed earlier and taking naps during the day when your baby sleeps. Feeding your baby can be a time to rest also.

Some mums find lying back when feeding helps their baby to attach in the early days. Arrange pillows and cushions in bed or on the couch so you find a comfortable position.

You don’t need a special diet when breastfeeding. Healthy eating with some healthy snacks will ensure you have the energy you need. So, eat well and drink plenty of water too.

Your public health nurse will visit to check how you and your baby are doing. She can help with any questions or concerns you have about breastfeeding. You should also visit your GP at two and six weeks for your postnatal check-ups.

“When I had my second baby, I had to realise that I am not Superwoman! A little planning helped. She fed a lot in the evening so we cooked a dinner earlier in the day that could be heated up later. My partner played with our toddler after dinner and put him to bed”.

Dads, friends and family can help by:

- Giving encouragement and support
- Preparing drinks and snacks and meals
- Helping with bathing and nappy changing
- Helping out with housework, laundry, grocery shopping, cooking
- Minding older children
- Knowing where to get breastfeeding information and support



Breastfeeding out and about

Breastfeeding is so convenient when you are out and about with your baby. You can shop and meet friends with your baby. There is very little to organise for trips, just bring a nappy change.

Since breastfeeding often looks like just cuddling a baby most people don't notice it. Wearing a top that lifts to let your baby feed will help you to feed discreetly. Some mothers like to drape a scarf over their shoulder while feeding.



Image from Friends of Breastfeeding, used with permission

“Breastfeeding in front of other people was something I worried about. I felt embarrassed and no-one in my family had ever breastfed. I went to the antenatal classes and breastfeeding group when I was expecting. It really helped to see how other mums fed their babies. I’ve got a lot more confident now.”

You are entitled to breastfeed in public places and you don't have to ask. Some places may offer a private area if you would like this, but you do not have to use it.



Expressing your milk

Expressing breastmilk means gently releasing milk from your breasts, either by hand or with a breast pump. It should not hurt to express your milk.

In the first few days if you need to express it is best to hand express. This can be helpful if your breasts feel too full and uncomfortable or to help your baby to attach.

If your baby is premature or too ill to feed from the breast the hospital staff will help and advise on how to best express and store your milk.

After the first few weeks if you are going to be away from your baby using a hand or electric pump to express milk can be helpful. Expressed milk can be stored and given to your baby at a later stage.

To express by pump

A variety of different pumps are available to buy or rent and suit different situations or women. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and more information.

Storing your milk at home

Any container can be used providing it has an airtight seal and can be sterilised. Label and date each container. Store the container in:

- a fridge (not in the door) for up to 5 days.
- the icebox in your fridge for up to 2 weeks.
- a fridge-freezer for 3 months.
- a deep freezer for up to 6 months.

Defrosting frozen breastmilk

Defrost frozen milk in the fridge or by standing the container in a jug of warm water. Keep the lid of the container out of the water. Once it's defrosted, use it straight away. Don't re-freeze milk once it's thawed. Make sure you use the oldest stored milk first.

Warming your milk

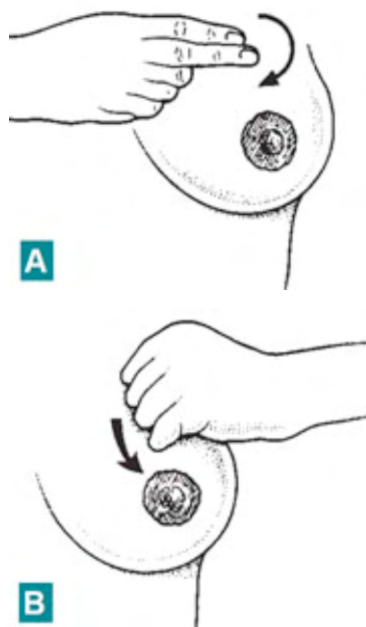
You can give your baby your milk straight from the fridge or warm it to room temperature. Warm defrosted milk by placing the container in lukewarm water. Never heat it in the microwave as this can destroy the nutrients and can cause hot spots which can burn your baby's mouth.

How to express by hand

1. Wash your hands first

2. You can help your milk to flow by:

- Sitting comfortably, relaxed and thinking about your baby
- Warming your breast, with a warm moist facecloth for example
- Massaging or stroking your breast (Pictures A & B), and gently rolling your nipple between your fingers
- Having your back massaged

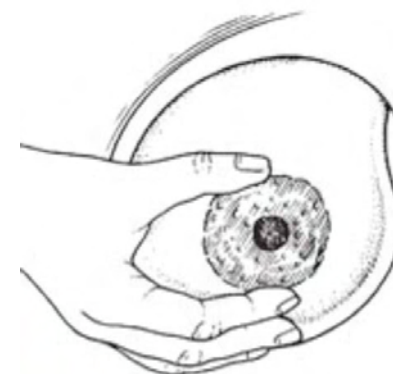


3. Make a C shape with your hand put your thumb on one side of the breast and first 2-3 fingers opposite towards the edge of your areola (the dark area around your nipple). Do not squeeze the nipple.

4. Press your fingers and thumb back towards your chest.

5. Gently but firmly press your breast between your fingers and thumb, this helps the milk move towards your nipple. Release and repeat the pressure until the milk starts to come out.

6. Move the position of your hand to a different part of your breast so that you release milk from other milk ducts. Move to the other breast when the flow of milk slows, if you are expressing from both breasts. Massage your breast occasionally as you move your hand around.



C



D

Good health begins with breastfeeding

Breastfeeding protects your baby's health and your health too.

Breastmilk is important for your baby's healthy growth and development and it protects his digestive system. It contains antibodies to protect your baby from illness and build his immune system. Breastfeeding is also important for your baby's brain development.

Your body will produce all the milk your baby needs for the first 6 months. No water or other fluids are needed. From 6 months you can start your baby on solid foods. You can continue to breastfeed until your baby is 2 years or older, or until your baby chooses to wean.

Breastfeeding is important for mothers' health too as it protects against ovarian and breast cancer as well as helping you to achieve and maintain a healthy post pregnancy weight. Breastfeeding is cost-free, convenient for you and your baby and always at the right temperature.

Research shows that children who are not breastfed have a greater risk of:

- **developing ear, nose and throat infections**
- **gastroenteritis (vomiting & diarrhoea)**
- **kidney and chest infections**
- **asthma and eczema**
- **obesity and diabetes, and**
- **sudden infant death syndrome**

Breastfeeding support

Help and support is important for all mums in the early weeks after their baby is born. For breastfeeding mums, their partner, family and friends can help in many practical ways such as with cooking, housework and minding older children.

Breastfeeding information and support is also provided by:

La Leche League
www.lalecheleagueireland.com

Cuidiú
www.cuidiu.ie

Friends of Breastfeeding
www.friendsofbreastfeeding.ie

Association of Lactation Consultants Ireland
www.alcireland.ie

Health Services – your midwife, public health nurse or GP

Visit **www.breastfeeding.ie** for contact details of support in your county. Your midwife or public health nurse can also give you contact details.

Breastfeeding support groups

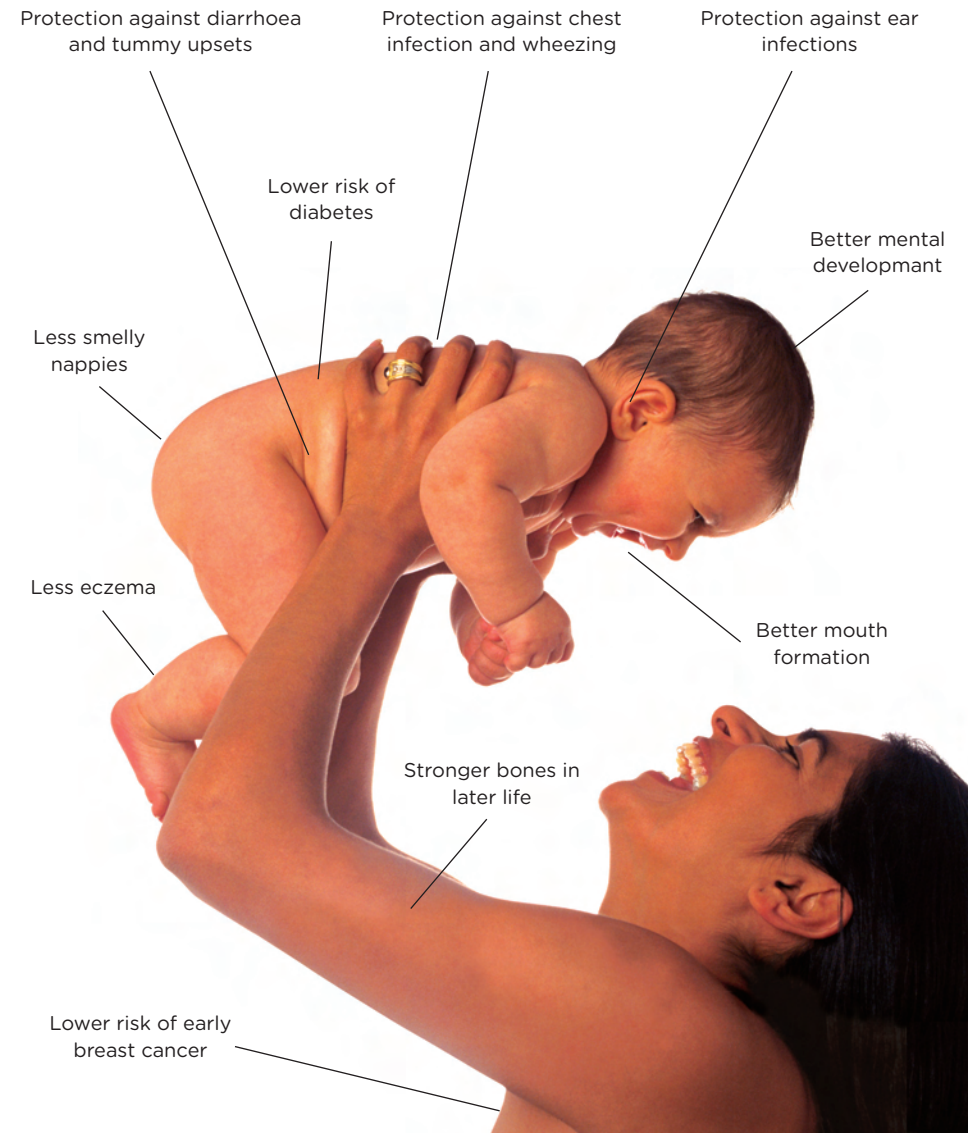
Support groups are a good opportunity to meet other mums as well as being a source of information and help. They are run by public health nurses, lactation consultants (IBCLCs), La Leche League Leaders or Cuidiú breastfeeding counsellors. All are trained to provide information and support to mums.

It can help to visit or contact a support group before you have your baby. You can get information on breastfeeding and have a support network in place for when your baby is born.



“My local group was a great help to me in the early days. I got so much support and made friends too. Months on and we’re flying it! Everything is so new when you have your baby but as the weeks go by breastfeeding gets easier and more enjoyable.”

Every breastfeed makes a difference





La Leche League



Cuidiú
Caring Support for Parenthood



**Baby
Friendly
Hospital
Initiative
in Ireland**



FRIENDS OF BREASTFEEDING



ALCI
ASSOCIATION OF LACTATION
CONSULTANTS IN IRELAND

This leaflet was developed jointly by the HSE, the Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, La Leche League, Cuidiú, and Friends of Breastfeeding.

Published by: Health Service Executive

Publication date: August 2013

Review date: March 2015

Order code: HPM00367



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Every Breastfeed Makes a Difference.