

Maternity Services: Is my newborn baby breastfeeding normally?

Many newborn babies feed irregularly at first - this can be normal. Here is some useful information to support you with your breastfeeding journey.

It feels like my baby is feeding all the time, is this normal?

- If your baby wants to feed often, try to think of this positively. The more your baby feeds the more milk you will have - your milk is produced on a “supply and demand” basis, so you will have plenty. Look for feeding cues from your baby (Hands to mouth, turning head to root, mouthing, squeaking noises, licking lips and light fussing).
- Your baby’s stomach is only the size of a marble at birth- they are designed to feed little and often. Small, frequent volumes of colostrum are what your baby needs. Colostrum is packed with energy.
- Colostrum is the perfect first milk- it is so full of immune boosting antibodies it has been called ‘the first immunisation’.
- Remember that nutrition is just one part of breastfeeding, and that sucking provides wonderful comfort, bonding and relaxation opportunities.
- Your body has provided the perfect home for your baby for months. It is natural for your baby to seek the familiar sound of your heartbeat, your voice and your smell. Breastfeeding and skin to skin contact provide this important closeness. It also provides you with a boost of “feel-good” oxytocin hormone, helping your uterus to contract.
- Ask staff to go through positioning and attachment with you to check baby has a good attachment. Baby will get a reduced amount of milk if there is not an effective attachment.



What should I consider before giving a bottle?

At times, when you are exhausted from labour and birth, meeting the needs of your baby can seem overwhelming. It can be tempting to give a bottle of formula milk, but this may lead to problems. You are entitled to know the risks of giving supplements of formula milk so that you can make an informed choice. Giving breastfed babies formula feeds can:

- Reduce your milk supply and your confidence in breastfeeding
- Increase the chance of allergy to cow’s milk protein.
- If you use a bottle teat in the first 4-6 weeks, it *may* cause difficulty with attachment.
- Breastfeeding ensures your baby has a healthy gut microbiome, supporting your baby’s immune system and reducing the risk of gastro enteritis, asthma, eczema, coughs and colds.

BRAIN can help you ask questions and make decisions. It is about considering the **B**enefits, **R**isks, **A**lternatives, using your **I**ntuition, or choosing to do **N**othing. If you are feeling that you need help and want to discuss feeding, please ask your midwife for support.

We are here to support you to make informed choices about feeding your baby

My baby isn’t feeding - what do I do?

- It is common for babies to feed infrequently in the first 24-48 hours; full term, healthy babies are well designed and can cope with infrequent feeds by using special energy stores.
- Your baby may be sleepy if he/she has been exposed to opiates (drugs) when you were in labour. Epidural opiates and Pethidine can travel through the placenta and affect your baby's desire to feed, making them sleepy and uninterested in sucking. Don't worry though, these effects only last up to 72 hours and don't have a long term effect.
- It is important, however, to stimulate your milk supply early if your baby does not want to feed regularly and especially during the night when your milk making hormone (prolactin) peaks.

Staff can show you how to hand express your colostrum or use a breast pump.

- You can then give this expressed milk to your baby via a syringe or cup, which often then makes babies more eager to feed.
- Skin to skin contact has been shown to stimulate babies to encourage them to feed, stabilise their body temperature, heart rate and breathing. It also helps to stimulate your milk supply.
- Another reason may be that your baby did not have enough skin to skin contact after birth and missed having a good first feed in the hour or so after birth. Prolonged skin to skin contact until your baby is feeding properly can really help.
- Try laid back position. Get into a reclined position and place the baby on top of you in any position that is comfortable for you. Allow the baby to locate the breast and latch. Baby's head will bob to locate the breast. When the chin feels the breast first, the mouth will open wide
- and latch.
- If lots of skin to skin contact does not start to wake your baby, you could try co-bathing; bathing together may help if your baby is really sleepy.
- Skin to skin contact and co-bathing can continue when you're at home. Dimming the lights and massaging your baby may help too.



**Breastfeeding really *is* worth the effort-
"every day counts, every feed counts, every drop counts"**

