

Preparing to feed your baby

Now is the time to start thinking about how you are going to feed your baby.

Breastfeeding *is* best for you and your baby, but if you are unsure about it or are undecided, taking some time to think about the benefits and comparing them with any worries you have about it will definitely help you make the right choice for you and your baby. Your midwife will support you with feeding, without any judgement, whatever you choose.

Breastfeeding

Most parents want to breastfeed their baby. New parents often say that breastfeeding is a special and rewarding experience – the skin-to-skin contact you both get during breastfeeding is also a great way to bond with your baby.

In fact, many women we spoke to said that bonding was the main reason for breastfeeding their newborn, rating it as being even more important to them than the health benefits.

Breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby. As well as the bonding experience for you and them, breastmilk contains everything your growing baby needs, including antibodies to protect against illnesses, and it is the best way to ensure your baby grows healthily whilst helping them stay a healthy weight.

Breastfeeding can be tricky to begin with, and you may be worried that you're not producing enough breast milk for your baby, but be assured that nearly all those that try breastfeeding are physically able to breastfeed and produce sufficient milk for their baby's needs.

Research has shown that breastfeeding can lower your risks of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, osteoporosis (weak bones), and cardiovascular disease (heart problems).

For more information on the benefits to you of breastfeeding go to 111.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/pregnancy/breastfeedingwhy/

Did you know?

As early as 16 weeks (second trimester) of your pregnancy, your body starts to produce milk. This first milk is often colostrum – which is thick, and usually golden yellow in colour and is full of nutrients to nourish your baby. Importantly, it also contains antibodies to protect them from disease.

You may find drops of colostrum on your nipples in the weeks leading up to birth. In the first few days after the birth colostrum will be your baby's source of nutrition before your main milk 'comes in'.

Need to know

Following the birth your breasts will start to produce more milk and they may start to feel fuller and a little bit uncomfortable.

If this happens speak to your midwife or visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/breastfeeding-problems/breast-pain/ for information on managing any pain and looking after your breasts during this time.

Some parents have told us that there were a number of concerns they had when making up their minds to breastfeed. Of course you have to weigh those up against the benefits of breastfeeding for you and your baby.

Some worry about what their partner, or others around them will think about them breastfeeding. It will help to start talking to your partner and important others about your reasons for choosing to breastfeed, and what the benefits and rewards are that mean something to you.

If your nearest and dearest know that breastfeeding is something that's important to you and they know the reasons why, then they're more likely to respect and support your decision.

Some parents worry that breastfeeding in public might be too embarrassing, and that people will disapprove or they will attract unwanted attention.

“Breastfeeding is so convenient and cheaper than bottle feeding too. I love the fact that I don't need to worry about making up bottles before we go out and we save a fortune by not having to buy formula.”

The truth is that many women who go on to breastfeed don't find that to be the case and are proud to have breastfed their babies. If you aren't sure what to believe, speak to your midwife or arrange to go to a local breastfeeding support group and talk to the other mums, to see what they have to say.

Need to know

If you're expecting twins or triplets it's perfectly possible to breastfeed them. Your health visitor can help you with breastfeeding positions which suit you best.

For more information on breastfeeding twins and triplets go to twinstrust.org/let-us-help/parenting/under-1s/feeding/breastfeeding.html

You might hear people say that breastfed infants are more unsettled and don't sleep as well as babies who are formula fed, making it all seem just too hard. However, the truth is that very few babies sleep well for the first 6 months or so, whether breast or bottle-fed. Babies have very small tummies so bottle feeding commonly leads to babies being overfed because parents are often keen for them to finish the bottle.

This can lead to unhealthy weight gain (see Step 5 of 10 Steps to a Healthy Weight – 'Helping Your Baby Grow Steadily' everychildwales.co.uk/growing-steadily).

“It's hard, but don't let anyone discourage you. The bond is amazing. It's unreal.”

“I treated breastfeeding as something that we both had to learn to do together. It didn't happen automatically for me at first like it does for some mums, but my midwife was incredibly helpful and helped me through the tricky first few days.”



“At first my milk took a while to come and the worry was that my baby wasn't getting enough. It was stressful and so tempting to give up trying and just give her formula. All of a sudden I started producing enough milk and I'm so glad now that I didn't give up.”

Many parents say breastfeeding is difficult at times, as it takes time and maybe some help to get right. As you have to do it throughout the day and night, it can be tiring and sometimes your nipples become painful. This can happen if the baby does not latch on properly. Your midwife can help you to learn the correct technique for this. Parents also say that if they had realistic expectations of what breastfeeding could be like, it would have helped them stick with it when they encountered difficulties, rather than thinking that they couldn't do it because there was something wrong with them.

A little preparation goes a long way

There are things you can do now to plan for the challenges of breastfeeding and know what you are going to do if things get tough, especially in those first few days while you and your baby are learning to get it right. These include finding out about breastfeeding positions and techniques, purchasing a comfortable nursing bra, and breast pads to absorb any leaks when not breastfeeding.

Some parents worry that they won't be able to breastfeed or think that they will be judged by others if they try but find they can't breastfeed like they wanted to. If you feel that way too, know that there will be lots of support available for you when the time comes – and no one will judge you for asking for help.

To help with your preparation, speak to your midwife now about breastfeeding your baby or any concerns you might have. Your midwife will also help you find out what support groups are available in your area to check out.

If you choose to breastfeed, after your baby is born your midwife will help you to develop the skills to do it right. Then, when you get home, your midwife or health visitor will also be able to give you help and advice, and let you know any local breastfeeding support groups where you can meet people like you who are going through the same things.

There are also some tips on the techniques and positions that are best for breastfeeding on page 100.

Formula feeding

Breastfeeding may not always be an option, whether it be due to physical or personal reasons. Equally, if you are breastfeeding but decide to give your baby formula milk at any time, it doesn't have to mean the end of your breastfeeding journey, though sometimes it's more difficult to keep breastfeeding once you've introduced the bottle.

You will need to have all the equipment at home ready for your baby's arrival.

You will need:

- Stage 1 formula feed
- Bottles and teats, which are often sold separately
- A bottle brush for cleaning bottles, caps and teats (although you can wash bottles and teats in the dishwasher if you have one)
- Sterilising equipment, there are three main ways to sterilise:
 - Cold water sterilising solution
 - Steam sterilising (electric steriliser or microwave)
 - Sterilising by boiling.

The majority of infants who are formula fed or mixed fed should be given a first infant milk (sometimes called *first stage* or *stage 1* milk)

throughout the first year, unless advised otherwise by a health professional. It is widely available in most supermarkets and pharmacists.

There are several different brands of baby formula, but all infant formula sold in the UK must meet the same regulations for what it contains – even the cheaper brands. That means that they're all perfectly safe to use, and will provide your baby with all the nutrients they need to help them grow and develop.

It's worth bearing this in mind because infant formula can be expensive, especially if you choose the bigger brands.

Don't forget, if you have a Healthy Start card, this can be used to pay for infant formula. Find out more at www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Safe formula feeding

The safe preparation of formula milk will greatly reduce the risk of infection and stomach bugs like vomiting and diarrhoea to your baby. There are safe preparation practices, for washing, sterilising, and preparing the feed, which must be followed to reduce the risks. How to do this is covered in *The first few days* section (see page 104).

Find out more

Find out more about feeding your baby:

Baby Friendly Initiative – www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/

First Steps Nutrition Trust, Infant milk for parents and carers – www.firststepsnutrition.org/parents-carers

NHS 111 Wales – 111.wales.nhs.uk

iFeed Project – www.ifeedproject.co.uk/