



Breastfeeding Potpourri

Here are some additional items on infant feeding that you may find beneficial.

Duration of breastfeeding

Your milk is the best milk for your baby and the benefits of breast milk accumulate with each feed. The World Health Organization, the Canadian Pediatric Society and many other health groups recommend that breastfeeding continue for two and more years. Around the world, many children do not stop breastfeeding until between three and five years of age. As children are ready to wean, they nurse less and less. This is called "infant-led weaning" and is a very gentle and easy way to wean. Babies become more distractible during nursing during the second six months. Their feeds are short and they wake up more at night. This is normal behaviour not weaning. Babies rarely wean during the first year.

You can nurse while you are pregnant as long as you have no history or risk of premature labour, you have no vaginal bleeding, and you are gaining an adequate amount of weight. Your toddler can continue to nurse after the next baby is born. A lot of women find nursing two at a time (tandem nursing) to be easier than nursing one alone. There is less jealousy and the toddler is easy to keep track of when s/he is nursing! The toddler will also help prevent engorgement and cracked and tender nipples. Of course, you must ensure that the nursing baby obtains enough calories. Ask us about this if you have questions.

Starting Solids

The current recommendation of Health Canada, the World Health Organization and the Canadian Pediatric Society is to start solids at six months (not before). These foods are to meet the infant's increasing nutritional requirements and developmental needs. You can add a new food each day. Socialize baby by including him/her in family mealtimes, offering him/her solids at the same times of day as the family eats. To prevent iron deficiency, an iron-containing food such as red meat, should be included in baby's diet soon after starting solids. Remember, though, that milk is a baby's most important food until one year of age and a very important food thereafter. Solids are meant to complement your baby's milk, not replace it. Babies do not need water. During the first-year babies don't need juice or dessert; these are treats and their use should be limited.

Home-made puréed baby food is usually fresher and tastier than store bought baby food and is very easy to make. Store-bought foods are extremely expensive, have a shelf-life you need to observe, and can contain products that offer poor nutrition such as corn starch and modified tapioca or that are not needed such as salt and sugar.



To make home-made baby food, simply boil the chosen food (carrots, peas, beef, etc.) until cooked, whirl it through the blender with a little cooking water added if needed, pour into ice cube trays, and freeze. When the cubes are frozen, pop them out into freezer bags and you're done! It is a simple matter to heat up a few cubes at mealtime. There is no need to sterilize the implements you use to make your baby's puréed foods; just make sure they are clean. Fruits can be ground or mashed and served fresh. Don't be afraid to give your baby herbs and spices. They enjoy different tastes and flavours and we want them to learn to eat a wide variety of foods. Bland food preferences will usually limit their choices to starches and processed foods which are usually high-fat and high salt foods. Do not give baby processed foods such as fries or packaged chicken fingers.

At about seven months, many infants are ready for food that has more texture than puréed foods. At this age, a baby-food mill is extremely handy. A baby-food mill is a small, plastic, hand-operated grinder that enables you to grind up a portion of your food for baby right at the table, converting table foods into baby food in seconds. It is easily carried in a diaper bag, which makes it especially useful when eating away from home.

Vitamin D

Because of the limited sunshine exposure of Canadian children, the Canadian Pediatric Society recommends that breastfed infants receive a supplementary source of vitamin D for the first year of life. In Northern Alberta, babies should receive 400 IU of vitamin D from May to September and 800 IU from October to April. Vitamin D can be purchased in a drop form. There is the brand name (D-Vi-Sol) which is very expensive (\$15.00), the generic drops (Life brand, Equate) for about \$9.00 and a new preparation called "D-Drops". With D-drops, you can buy one bottle for the whole year so it is by far the cheapest and you only need to give baby one drop instead of 1 ml so there is a lot less choking. Unless, your baby was born very prematurely and your physician has recommended this, (s)he does not need the triple vitamin preparation of A, C, and D.

Teeth

You may be wondering about breastfeeding a baby with teeth. If your baby bites while nursing, take him/her off the breast and reprimand him/her sternly: "No! Don't bite!" If baby won't let go, try pinching his/her nose. The very persistent biter may need to be set on the floor for a short "time out" to reinforce the no biting rule. Most babies learn very quickly not to bite and it is very rare to see a mother with a bite wound.



Working Outside the Home/Pumping

If you expect to regularly be separated from your baby because of employment, study, etc., you can still continue breastfeeding. The older your baby is, the more flexible breastfeeding can be. You may wish to pump while away from your baby to provide breast milk for someone else to feed to your baby. You might also wish to pump for your comfort and to prevent leaking. If you are not pumping, your baby can receive stored breast milk or if necessary, formula or if baby is over one year of age, homogenized milk, when you are separated. The baby breastfeeds whenever the two of you are together.

The kind of pump you choose will depend on how often you pump, how much you want to spend, and what works best for you. For more information about pumping, please ask for our information sheet on pumping.

If continuing to breastfeed seems like a lot of work to you, consider that breastfed infants are healthier and healthy babies are a lot less work than sick babies. If you are a working mother, studies have shown significantly less employee absenteeism among breastfeeding mothers compared to formula feeding mothers. If you decide to use formula, remember to plan for the cost—about \$200 per month until your baby is 10 to 12 months old and ensure that your baby can tolerate formula.

Breast Examination

Most lumps that arise during breastfeeding are innocent but breast cancer can develop during breastfeeding. If you find any new lumps that do not settle with nursing and remain after several days, see your doctor as soon as possible.