

## 1. Premature and/or Low Birth Weight

Premature birth is when a baby is born before 37 weeks' gestation. Prematurity often will mean that the baby is born at a low birth weight, defined as less than 2,5 kg. Low birth weight can also be caused by malnourishment in the mother.

If your baby is born prematurely, breast milk will help their vulnerable tummy to mature and fight infection. Breast milk is easier for their stomachs to digest than infant formula. It also contains hormones and growth factors that help your baby grow and become stronger.

As soon as possible, you'll be encouraged to spend time holding your baby against your skin. This is called Kangaroo Care.

## 2. Breastfeeding twins

The benefits of human milk to mothers of twins are the same as for all mothers and babies – possibly greater, because many twins are born early. But the idea may seem overwhelming! Yet many of these moms find breastfeeding easier than other feeding methods because there is nothing to prepare. Many mothers have overcome challenges to successfully breastfeed twins.



## Breastfeeding Advice

### Learn your baby's hunger signs.

**Early hunger cues:** When babies are hungry, they become more alert and active. They may put their hands or fists to their mouths, make sucking motions with their mouth, or turn their heads looking for the breast.

If anything touches the baby's cheek – such as a hand – the baby may turn toward the hand, ready to eat. This sign of hunger is called **rooting**. Offer your breast when your baby shows rooting signs.



Crying can be a **late sign of hunger**, and it may be harder to latch once the baby is upset. Over time, you will be able to learn your baby's cues for when to start feeding.



### Start Feeding

Make sure you are both comfortable and follow your baby's lead after he or she is latched on well. Older babies take both breasts at each feeding. Newborn babies usually take one breast at a feeding. Baby will let go of the breast when finished and often falls asleep. This will ensure the baby gets the **"hind"** milk – the fattier milk at the end of a feeding. Offer the other breast if baby seems to want more.

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M Gilfillan, E van Rooyen

*Your guide to breastfeeding, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011*

### Keep your baby close to you

Remember that your baby is not used to this new world and needs to be held very close to his or her mother. Being skin to skin helps babies cry less and stabilizes the baby's heart and breathing rates. Babies sleep better and cry less. They develop a sleep-awake rhythm when they are close to you. Breastfeeding is established sooner and baby gains weight quickly. With your baby close by it is not an effort to care for your baby and you can feel less worried that something can go wrong. Baby is less exposed to infections and this closeness promotes bonding (mom-baby love).



### How often should I breastfeed?

Early and often! Breastfeed as soon as possible after birth, then breastfeed at least 8 to 12 times every 24 hours to make plenty of milk for your baby. This means that in the first few days after birth, your baby will likely need to breastfeed about every hour or two in the daytime and a couple of times at night.

### Know when to wake the baby

In the early weeks after birth, you should wake your baby to feed if 4 hours have passed since the beginning of the last feeding. Some tips for waking the baby include:

- Changing your baby's diaper, remove heavy clothing
- Placing your baby skin to skin
- Massaging your baby's back, abdomen, and legs

Healthy babies develop their own feeding schedules. Follow your baby's cues for when he or she is ready to eat.

If your baby is falling asleep at the breast during most feedings, try feeding some expressed milk by cup or consult a health worker.

### How long should I breastfeed?

It is recommended that most infants breastfeed for 2 years and even longer, with exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months. This means that babies are not given any foods or liquids other than breast milk for the first 6 months. Breast milk provides all the nutrients and fluids that baby needs to grow and develop.

After 6 months babies must receive other foods in addition to breast milk. Start by introducing porridge and slowly add vegetables and later fruit. All food needs to be soft, mashed or pureed.

Breast milk continues to be important and makes up the largest part of baby's diet, often providing 30% - 50% of the total energy at age 1 year.

### How long should feedings be?

Feedings may be 15 to 20 minutes or longer per breast. But there is no set time. Your baby will let you know when he or she is finished.

### How much do babies typically eat?

A newborn's tummy is very small, especially in the early days. The baby's stomach can comfortably digest what would fit in a hazelnut (about 1-2 teaspoons). In the first week, the baby's stomach grows to hold about 60ml or what would fit in a walnut.



Once breastfeeding is established, exclusively breastfed babies may take in 600ml and more per day. If you breastfeed 8 times per day, the baby would eat 70ml to 120 ml per feeding. Older babies will take less breast milk as other food is introduced. Every baby though, is different.

### I cannot be with my baby to breastfeed, what can I do?

If you are separated from your baby, express milk and feed baby with a cup. If you have to go back to work you can continue breastfeeding by expressing milk for baby during the day and breastfeeding at night and weekends. (See pamphlet for working mothers for further details)

### Avoid nipple confusion.

Avoid using dummies, bottles, and supplements of infant formula in the first few weeks unless there is a medical reason to do so. If supplementation is needed, try to give expressed breast milk first. But it's best just to feed at the breast. This will help you make milk and keep your baby from getting confused while learning to breastfeed.

### Breastfeeding in a baby with health problems

There are some health problems in babies that can make it harder to breastfeed. Yet breast milk and early breastfeeding are still best for the health of both you and your baby – even more so if your baby is premature or sick. If your baby cannot breastfeed directly from you, it's best to express your milk and give it to your baby with a cup or dropper.