

Your guide to



Early Childhood Nutrition



0-6

months





Dear Mama and Papa, thank you for all that you do for me! The right nutrition will help me to grow big and strong! As my nutritional needs change over different stages of growth, this booklet will guide you to ensure the best for my development and health!

STAGE 1

0-6
months

Breast milk or infant formula

Breast milk provides the perfect nourishment I need as it contains antibodies, hormones and other naturally occurring nutrients that can't be found in infant formula. Did you know that the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for at least 6 months? If that's not possible, formula milk is a good alternative or supplement.

STAGE 2

6-12
months

Introducing solids with breast milk or infant formula

As my digestive system develops, my nutritional and developmental needs will increase. When I'm around 6 months old, you can start giving me solid food, through a process known as weaning! Start with iron-rich foods that are easy to ingest such as finely minced meat or fish, and iron-fortified rice cereals. Yum!

STAGE 3

12 months
and older

Solids and milk

At this stage, I'll be able to eat the same food as you. But remember, milk will still be an important part of my diet! Make sure you prepare my food with little or no salt, sugar and seasoning. If I'm not eating much, don't worry! It's normal for my growth and appetite to slow down at this point. So, you can relax and let me choose how much to eat.

Facts about breast milk

The nutritional composition of breast milk changes according to my needs, which can vary from day to day, and throughout the day. Amazing, right?

When you first start breastfeeding, your breasts will produce small amounts of colostrum or first milk, which is rich in protein, minerals and antibodies that I need during the first few days. About 2 weeks later, your breast milk changes to mature milk which contains the following key nutrients:

FUNCTION	NUTRIENTS IN BREAST MILK (Examples only, not complete list)
Energy and growth	Fat, carbohydrates, protein, growth factors, nucleotides
Brain and eye	Omega-3 fatty acids such as DHA, taurine
Digestive system	Oligosaccharides, taurine, enzymes
Immune system	Immunoglobulins, selenium, beta-carotene, nucleotides, oligosaccharides
Cardiovascular system and blood	Iron, lactoferrin, vitamin K
Bones	Calcium, phosphorus, vitamin D



Breastfeeding creates a special bond between us!



FOR ME



Breast milk has all the nutrition I need as it:

- Contains all the essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients necessary for my growth and development.
- Is easily digested and less likely to lead to an upset stomach, constipation or diarrhoea.
- Is filled with antibodies that boost immunity and reduce my risk of infections.
- Reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, as well as obesity and diabetes in adulthood.

FOR MAMA



There are benefits for you too!

- Early suckling helps your womb contract faster and reduces blood loss after childbirth.
- Delays the return of your menstrual period and is a natural, although imperfect, contraceptive.
- Burns calories for weight loss.
- Reduces the risk of breast and womb cancer, heart disease and osteoporosis.



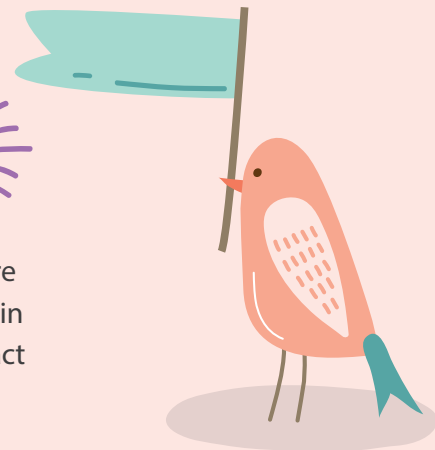
Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI)

The BFHI is dedicated to promoting exclusive breastfeeding among mothers. That means providing mothers and babies with the best maternal and infant health support as well as prenatal and postnatal education on breastfeeding. To encourage successful breastfeeding, BFHI hospitals not only provide a conducive environment with 24-hour rooming in, but also promote at least one hour of skin-to-skin contact between mother and child immediately after birth.



Learn more about BFHI
go.gov.sg/ecn-bfhi

Ready, set, suckle



My suckling reflex is most intense during the first hour after birth. So if we're both well, it's time to get close! Place me on your chest, ensuring skin-to-skin contact for at least an hour within 5 minutes after delivery. This close contact calms me down and encourages me to breastfeed.



HOW DO YOU KNOW IF I'M READY FOR FEEDING?

These early feeding cues will let you know I'm ready:

- Increased eye movements under closed or open eyes.
- Opening my mouth and turning my head to look for your breast.
- Making soft sucking sounds.
- Moving towards your finger when you place it near the corner of my mouth.
- Sucking and chewing on my hands, fingers or other objects that come in contact with my mouth.



YOU KNOW WE HAVE A GOOD LATCH WHEN:

- My upper and lower lips flare out to form a good seal on your breast.
- My chin is touching your breast and my nose is slightly away.
- Your areola is drawn into my mouth.
- My cheek is round.
- You feel the initial tug on your nipple and there's no pain or discomfort.
- I'm sucking and swallowing.



My upper and lower lips are flared out and the whole areola is taken into my mouth. The nipple is drawn far into my mouth and milk flows.



Only the nipple is taken into my mouth. The nipple is pinched and milk cannot flow.

Finding the sweet spot

TIPS TO HELP YOU POSITION ME FOR BREASTFEEDING

- Sit comfortably and make sure that your back and the arm with which you hold me are well supported (with a pillow or cushion).
- Gently massage your breast to clear any blocked milk ducts.
- Hold me at breast level with me facing you (chest to chest). Support your breast with your other hand.
- Tease me to open my mouth as wide as possible and direct your nipple to the roof of my mouth.
- Make sure I take in the whole areola and not just the nipple.
- Finally, take a breath, sit back, relax and let's enjoy our time together!

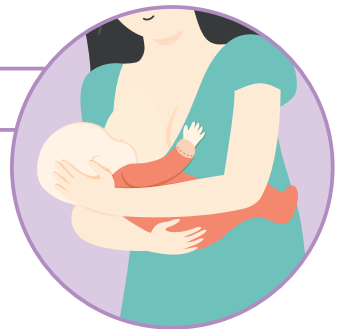
CRADLING TECHNIQUES

You can breastfeed sitting or lying down. Here are some cradling techniques you can use. Pick one that is comfy for you and we're all set!



CRADLE HOLD

Great when we're both able to coordinate well and I can latch on easily. Support my head in the crook of your arm, buttocks with your hand and my face and body turned towards you.



CROSS CRADLE HOLD

For newborns, small or premature babies and Mamas with short nipples. Support the back of my head and shoulder at the nape of my neck using your palm, and my body and buttock with your forearm.



FOOTBALL HOLD

For small babies, Mamas with large breasts and short nipples or Mamas who have undergone caesarean delivery. Support my head and shoulder at the nape of my neck with your palm, and my body and buttock with your forearm. Tuck me under your arm so that my legs are behind you and my head is at your breast.

LYING DOWN

For feeding at night and Mamas who have undergone caesarean or forceps delivery. Lie on your side with a pillow under your head and behind your back with me facing you.



Breast milk supply

Worried about not producing enough breast milk? It's normal for new Mamas to feel this way. But don't worry, you're actually producing milk all the time! Frequent and effective milk removal is all you need to ensure a constant supply.



TIPS YOU SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR:

- Ensure I have a good latch.
- Breastfeed regularly every 2-3 hours, according to my needs.
- Let me drink from one breast per feed to ensure that I get all the protein, fat and other nutrients I need. This process takes about 20–45 minutes. Only offer the other breast if I still show signs of hunger.
- Avoid supplementary feeding with formula milk as this may affect my appetite for breast milk.
- If I'm not well or separated from you, express breast milk every 3–4 hours to keep your milk production going.
- Avoid feeding from a bottle or using a pacifier until after 4–6 weeks as it may cause “nipple confusion”.



This herb that's commonly used in cooking curry, can help increase milk supply.

Fenugreek is available in tea or capsule form. However, do consume it in moderation!

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT?

When deciding what to eat when you're breastfeeding, there's no need to restrict your diet. That's unless I display a reaction to a particular food. Here are some points to note:

- Have a balanced diet to ensure that you have sufficient nutrients for milk production.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco products, and limit your caffeine intake as these can affect milk production.
- Refrain from consuming fish that are high in mercury, such as shark, swordfish, tuna, and king mackerel.
- Certain food proteins, such as peanut or cow's milk protein, can be transmitted through a mother's milk. If we have a family history of food allergies, you can reduce my risk of developing food allergies by eliminating or controlling your intake of allergens.
- Avoid taking weight loss pills. Breastfeeding can help you get back to your pre-pregnancy weight. So, it's best to continue breastfeeding while maintaining a healthy diet.

Mama's going back to work!



Preparing to head back to work after your maternity leave? You must be wondering how you can continue to breastfeed me. With planning, I can still have the nourishment of breast milk. Here are some tips to help you adjust to your new schedule!

BEFORE GOING BACK TO WORK

- Start expressing and storing your milk as early as 2 weeks before.
- Introduce the bottle to me by replacing 1 or 2 feeds for about 4–6 weeks. This may teach me to use the bottle in addition to direct breastfeeding.
- If possible, you can start getting someone else, like Papa, to feed me!

AT WORK

- Feed me before you go to work and as soon as you arrive home.
- While you're at work, express your milk at regular intervals.
- It'll be good to let your boss and colleagues know about your lactation requirements, such as your breastfeeding schedule and a fridge to store your breast milk.
- If the office doesn't have a dedicated lactation room, request for one or ask about using a spare room that's conducive.
- You need to be relaxed and comfortable to express. Thinking about me or looking at my pictures can stimulate milk flow. So let's take some cute photos together!
- Pumping is a skill you'll learn, so don't worry if the first few pumps don't yield as much milk! As your body gets used to the pump, the yield will naturally increase.



Expressing breast milk

Ways to express breast milk:



With a breast pump

or



Manually with your hand

EXPRESSING WITH A BREAST PUMP

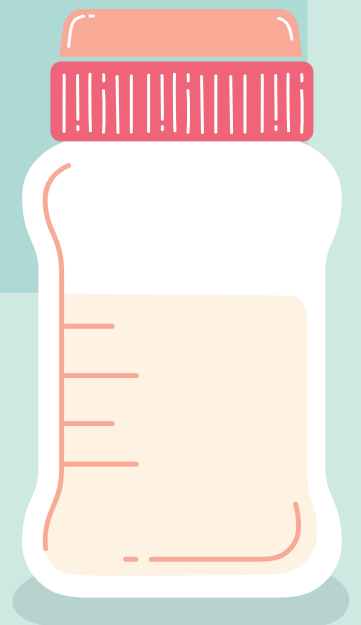
- Before you start, always wash your hands thoroughly.
- Ensure all your equipment is clean and sterilised.
- Pump for about 20 minutes on each side of the breast.
- Express your breast milk every 3–4 hours and keep it in sterile breast milk zipper bags or bottles before storing them in a fridge or freezer.

STORAGE OF BREAST MILK

PLACE OF STORAGE	RECOMMENDED STORAGE DURATION
Expressed milk at room temperature of 25°C	4 hours
Expressed milk in a cooler with ice pack at 15°C	24 hours
Expressed milk stored in the fridge at 4°C	48 hours
Frozen milk in 2-door fridge stored at -5°C to -15°C	3 – 6 months
Frozen milk in deep freezer at -20°C	6 – 12 months
Thawed breast milk stored in the fridge at 4°C	24 hours

THAWING PROCESS

- Thaw frozen milk in the refrigerator or in a cup of warm water.
- Use the milk immediately and discard the leftover.
- Do not boil or heat breast milk in a microwave.
- Do not re-freeze or re-warm the breast milk.



Solutions to common breastfeeding problems



Nursing is an amazing and fulfilling experience. While you may encounter some bumps in your journey, don't worry you're not alone! Here are some possible breastfeeding problems and their solutions.

PROBLEM: SORE OR CRACKED NIPPLES	
CAUSE: I am not positioned or latched on properly.	
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gently take me off your breast, then re-attach and re-position me.• Reduce the nursing duration but increase the number of feeds.• Breastfeed on the unaffected breast.• Rub a few drops of breast milk on the nipples to soothe them.• Apply nipple cream or balm that is safe for babies.
PROBLEM: ENGORGEMENT	
CAUSE: Missed feeds.	
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express some breast milk before nursing if I have trouble latching on.• Massage your breast gently while I am feeding. Express after the feed if your breast still feels hard or swollen.• Use cold packs after a feed to soothe the swelling.
PROBLEM: PLUGGED DUCTS	
CAUSE: A blocked milk duct which is not draining well into the nipple.	
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start nursing from the affected breast first.• Keep the affected breast as empty as possible by nursing frequently.• Apply mild pressure with a warm towel on the lump, gently pushing it towards the nipple.• Change feeding positions to help empty the breast. Manually express your breast if necessary.
PROBLEM: MASTITIS	
CAUSE: A bacterial infection that usually affects one breast. The affected breast may appear to be red, hot and swollen, or may have a painful lump.	
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get help from a doctor or lactation consultant.• You may be given antibiotics and painkillers for the pain and fever.
PROBLEM: THRUSH	
CAUSE: A yeast infection that may affect both of us. You may experience itchy, red or sore nipples and I may have white patches in my mouth.	
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's important that we both seek treatment immediately.• Get help from a doctor who may prescribe antifungal medication for us.



Formula milk

While breast milk is highly recommended, formula milk is an alternative and supplementary source of infant nutrition when breastfeeding is inadequate or not possible.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT FORMULAS FOR MY DEVELOPMENT STAGES?

Stage 1 Milk

This is formulated for infants like me who are 0–6 months old. Stage 1 formula mimics the nutritional composition of breast milk and is easily digestible.

Stage 2 Milk

This is formulated for infants who are 6–12 months old, who have more developed digestive systems and kidneys. Stage 2 milk is usually fortified with iron as my stored iron starts to deplete when I am 6 months and older.

Beyond 12 months

Infants should be eating solid food in smaller portions. If they are drinking infant formula, they can switch to plain full cream milk, in chilled, pasteurised UHT or powdered form.

MY STOOLS ARE HARD. SHOULD YOU OFFER ME WATER OR FRUIT JUICE?

While I'm on formula milk, I might develop more formed stools. But it doesn't necessarily mean that I'm constipated! As long as I'm consuming enough infant formula, I won't need additional fluids or water. Fruit juice is not recommended as it is high in sugar and can affect my appetite and nutrition intake.




All infant formulas provide the same essential nutrients

As milk is the only source of nutrition for your baby at this stage, the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) has stringent nutritional requirements for all infant formulas sold locally. So, rest assured that all infant formulas sold in Singapore provide sufficient nutrition for your baby to grow healthily, regardless of the brand you choose.



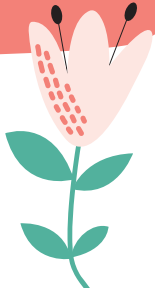
ALL BRANDS ARE SAFE!

According to the standards by SFA, all infant formulas sold in Singapore are safe, no matter the price. If your baby has any unique nutritional requirements, please consult a paediatrician who can advise on the need for specialised formulas.



Only give plain full cream milk from 12 months and above!

Babies below the age of 12 months should not take plain full cream milk such as chilled pasteurised, UHT (ultra-high temperature) and powdered plain full cream milk, as it is not as easily digestible as breast milk or infant formula. The high concentration of protein and minerals can stress a newborn's kidneys and cause dehydration. It may also irritate the stomach and intestinal lining which can lead to loss of blood in stools and cause iron deficiency anaemia.



Types of infant formula

Generally, there are three basic types of infant formula milk: cow's milk-based, soy-based and specialised formulas.



The standard base of an infant formula is cow's milk which has been modified to mimic the composition of breast milk. Most babies without special conditions do well on standard cow's milk based formula.



Soy-based formulas don't contain lactose and animal proteins, and could be an option for infants who are lactose intolerant. It's recommended that you consult your doctor or paediatrician before starting me on soy-based formulas.



Specialised formulas are made for infants with specific medical conditions and are generally more expensive than standard infant formulas. Make sure to consult for medical advice before feeding me with specialised formulas!

HOW MUCH MILK SHOULD YOU FEED ME?

The amount of milk I need will vary according to my growth and body weight. For infants who are 0–6 months old, HPB recommends consuming around 500–750ml of milk per day, supplemented with solid food at around 6 months to meet my growing nutritional and development needs. Don't force me to finish the bottle if I appear to be full. If I have a specially-prescribed formula to follow, do consult a paediatrician on how much to feed me every day.

Important

Don't pack more than the required milk powder or water in my feed. Too much water and I may not get the calories and nutrients I need for proper growth. While too much powder could cause diarrhoea or dehydration and give me more calories and nutrients than required.

Switching formula brands

There's no fixed rule on how to switch between formula brands. I may have my own likes and dislikes. As taste differs between formula brands, how fast I will switch depends on how quickly I adapt to the new brand. You can start by gradually increasing the number of feeds of the new brand. If I adapt well, you can take on a faster pace until all my feeds are replaced with the new brand.

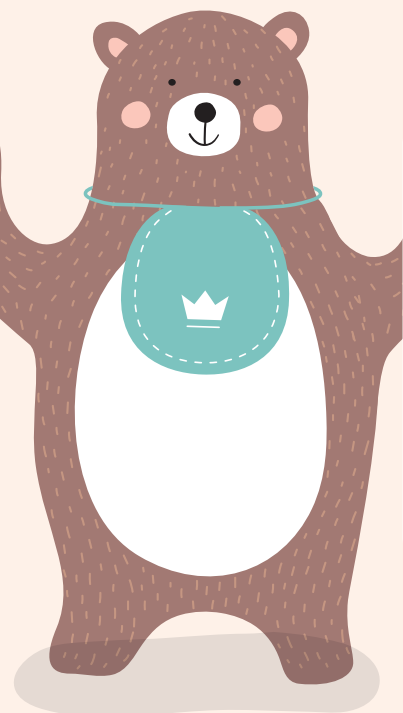
During this period, you may notice a change in frequency, texture, and/or colour in my stool. This is completely normal as the amount of added nutrients such as iron and prebiotics vary between brands. If I don't show any signs of allergy to the original cow's-milk based formula, hooray! It means that I'm unlikely to develop allergic reactions when switching to another cow's milk-based formula.



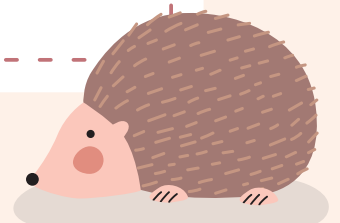
**UH OH! WILL I GET
INDIGESTION OR DIARRHOEA
DURING THE SWITCH?**



**Different brands of
formula milk have different
compositions. So, it's
recommended that you
don't mix 2 or more
brands of formula milk
when preparing
a feed.**



Most babies can tolerate formulas well, but this may differ slightly. Stools can range from hard to loose depending on how well the ingredients are digested and absorbed. Generally, indigestion or diarrhoea is unlikely if you're switching between formulas with similar compositions.



In summary

Starting with the right nutrition is key to giving me a bright and happy future. When it comes to the first 6 months of my nutrition, do remember these key points!

#1



Breast milk is highly recommended for me.

#2

Aim to exclusively breastfeed me for at least 6 months.



#3



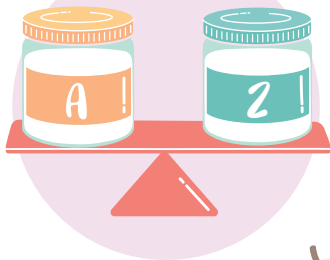
Breastfeeding helps to build a bond between us.

#4

Formula milk is a nutritionally adequate alternative when breastfeeding is not possible.



#5



All formula brands provide sufficient nutrition for me to grow healthily, and are safe for consumption!

#6

Feed me plain full cream milk only after I turn 12 months old.



I'm
now



6 months
old,

what's
next?

Now that I'm 6 months old, I'm about to learn how to chew and swallow food. As my digestive system develops and nutritional needs increase, you can start introducing solids into my diet. While milk will still be my staple, you can begin weaning me by introducing me to a single ingredient food, 1–2 teaspoons at a time, over a few days.

Some yummy foods you can start me off with are iron-fortified rice cereals, vegetables, fruit, and finely minced meat or fish. You can vary the form and texture of the food, but remember to always keep it soft, smooth and fine. Smooth purees or soft and mashed textures are easier to digest.

For a full guide on my nutritional needs, refer to the next booklet in the series — **Your Guide To Early Childhood Nutrition: 6–12 months**






Need
more
help?





For more on breastfeeding and early childhood nutrition, visit healthhub.sg/earlynutrition

You may also reach out to any of these support groups.



Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group (Singapore)

-  Counselling hotline 6339 3558
-  Email contact@breastfeeding.org.sg
-  Website breastfeeding.org.sg

Joyful Parenting and Breastfeeding

-  Hotline 6488 0286
-  Email joyfulparenting@gmail.com

Association for Breastfeeding Advocacy Singapore (ABAS)

-  Email abas.sec@gmail.com
-  Website abas.org.sg

Lactation Consultant Services

Available by appointment at selected maternity hospitals. Please visit HealthHub for more information at go.gov.sg/pregnancyhelplines





Health
Promotion
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