

# Your breastmilk is all your baby needs

Information for parents of healthy, full-term newborns

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## Health Canada Statement on Breastfeeding:

**“Breastfeeding is the normal and unequalled method of feeding infants.”**

Health Canada recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, and continued breastfeeding for up to 2 years or longer (along with other foods).

Your breastmilk is made especially for your baby. There are many proven benefits to breastfeeding, which increase the longer you breastfeed.

These benefits include:

- Less chance of your baby developing asthma, respiratory and gastrointestinal illness, ear infection, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, obesity, diabetes and childhood cancers.
- Better development in your baby’s intelligence, movement, and behaviours.
- Better bonding (emotional attachment) with your baby.

**Formula supplements should not be given to your baby unless there is a medical reason.** Although formula provides basic nutrition, it lacks properties that are found only in breastmilk.

Possible effects of formula supplements	Benefits of breastmilk ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formula changes the natural protection against infection found in the baby’s intestines.</li><li>• Formula is harder to digest, and may cause more spitting up.</li><li>• If your baby feeds less often because of formula supplementation, your milk supply may decrease.</li><li>• Early use of formula may trigger allergies in some children.</li><li>• Giving formula supplements <b>without a medical reason</b> often leads to early weaning.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Breastmilk coats the intestines and prevents infection from harmful bacteria and viruses.</li><li>• Breastmilk digests easily and is well tolerated.</li><li>• Exclusive breastfeeding guided by your baby’s cues – at least 8 times a day – will increase your milk supply to the perfect amount for your baby.</li><li>• Breastmilk protects against allergies.</li><li>• Feeding only breastmilk builds your milk supply and your confidence.</li></ul>

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### Did you know?

- About 9 out of 10 mothers start breastfeeding in hospital.
- 4 out of 10 babies are given supplements in hospital without a medical reason.
- By 3 months, babies who were given supplements in hospital are 4 times more likely to have weaned from breastfeeding.

## What if my baby needs supplements?

**Occasionally, the doctor or midwife may decide supplements are necessary when:**

- the baby has low blood sugar, which does not get better with breastfeeding
- the baby's body lacks water, called dehydration
- the baby has jaundice because he or she is feeding poorly
- the mother is ill and cannot be with her baby
- the baby is ill and cannot suckle at the breast

If your baby needs supplements, your doctor or midwife will discuss this with you.

**Your own breastmilk is the best supplement.** Your nurse or a lactation consultant will show you how to express your breastmilk and give it to your baby.

## How are supplements given?

Supplements can be given by:

- attaching a thin, plastic tube at the breast, called a supplemental nursing system
- attaching a thin tube on a finger, called finger feeding
- a cup or a spoon
- using a wide-based nipple and bottle

Your nurse or lactation consultant will help you choose the method of feeding that is right for you. We may try other methods before bottle-feeding as some babies find it harder to learn how to breastfeed after using a bottle. This is because sucking on a bottle nipple is different than sucking on the breast. The bottle may also flow too quickly for a baby who is learning to breastfeed.