

# How will you feed your baby?

## *In this fact sheet*

Breastfeeding or formula feeding

Why breastfeeding is ideal

For your baby

For you

When formula feeding is necessary

Using a dummy

Remember, the information on this fact sheet should not be used or relied on as an alternative to professional care. If you have a particular problem, see your health care professional.

Before the birth of your baby, you need to consider how you are going to feed your baby. To be able to make the best decision for you and your baby it is a good idea to find out as much as you can during your pregnancy. Your midwife, doctor, hospital and the Australian Breastfeeding Association can provide you with information about feeding your baby.

## **Breastfeeding or formula feeding**

Breastfeeding will give your baby the healthiest start in life.

- Medical research is finding out more and more about how beneficial breastfeeding is for you and your baby.
- Almost all women can breastfeed their babies.
- In fact it is rare that a mother does not produce breast milk.

It is normal to have some ups and downs with breastfeeding, especially during the first few weeks. Some women take longer to establish a milk supply that meets their baby's needs. But with the right support and advice, you can usually overcome any problems so that you and your baby can enjoy all the benefits of breastfeeding.

Some women will have breastfeeding difficulties that are hard to overcome and they may choose to feed their baby with formula. Sometimes formula feeding provides an alternative that works well for a mother and her family.

Whatever the reasons, if you have chosen to feed your baby formula the midwives will provide support and information. Generally your hospital will encourage you to breastfeed, but will support and help you whichever way you feed your baby.

## **Why breastfeeding is ideal**

When you are pregnant, your body makes milk for your baby. It is the perfect food as soon as your baby is born, even if your baby is born prematurely.

- Up to 6 months breast milk is all the nourishment your growing baby needs.
- Between 6 and 12 months of age, your milk is still able to provide your baby with most of the ingredients they need, as you introduce other foods.
- Breastfeeding is good for you and your baby, even if you are unwell, pregnant, playing sport or menstruating (having your monthly periods).
- Breast milk is always fresh, the

perfect drinking temperature, satisfies your baby's thirst and hunger, is convenient, portable and ready for your baby.

- In fact, the more your baby breastfeeds, the more milk you make.

## **For your baby**

Breastfeeding is the ideal way to feed your baby because:

- Breast milk is a complete food for your baby's growth and development for the first 6 months
- Breast milk contains antibodies that help to protect your baby from germs and illnesses, like diarrhoea, chest and ear infections
- Breast milk contains long chain fatty acids that help your baby's brain develop
- It is a great way to calm and comfort an upset baby
- It develops a special closeness between you and your baby
- Breast milk is easier to digest than infant formula or cows' milk
- It helps the baby's jaw and tooth development.

## **For you**

Breastfeeding is great for you because:

- Breast milk is always ready to give to your baby; you don't have to do anything to get it ready.
- Breast milk is free - don't have to buy it!
- You have a chance to rest when you sit or lie down to breastfeed.



An Australian Government Initiative

For more information on this topic or any issues related to pregnancy, birth or babies, call the free 24 hour helpline:

**1800 882 436**



- Breastfeeding gives you a chance to have a quiet time with your baby.
- Your periods may take longer to return while you are breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding helps make your uterus (womb) return to normal size soon after your baby is born.
- Breastfeeding may help you to lose extra fat you have stored from your pregnancy.
- You gain some protection against pre-menopausal breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.
- Not all babies need or want a dummy.
- A dummy should not be given instead of a breastfeed or love and attention.
- Some research suggests that using a dummy helps protect a baby from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Make sure your baby's dummy is always kept clean by washing it in warm soapy water and rinsing it. Do not 'clean' it by putting it into your mouth.
- Check your baby's dummy regularly for signs of wear - babies can choke on pieces that break off their dummy.
- Do not put honey, glycerine or any other type of sweetener on your baby's dummy, as these can cause tooth decay when your baby's teeth come through.
- Never tie the dummy around your baby's neck because it could choke your baby. If you want to, you can attach the dummy to the front of your baby's clothing using a short cord.

### **When formula feeding is necessary**

It may be necessary to feed your baby formula:

- When you cannot overcome problems with breastfeeding.
- If your baby has a special reason to have formula, such as a metabolic disease, and cannot have breast milk.
- In some cases if you are very ill.
- If you are HIV positive (have the virus that causes AIDS).

If you do choose to feed your baby formula, no matter what the reasons, you should be reassured that your baby will thrive and that you will receive help and support from your midwife or child health nurse.

For more information, have a look at the topic *Bottle Feeding all About formula feeding*.

### **Using a dummy**

Some babies find dummies comforting, but there are a few things to watch if you wish to give your baby a dummy:

- It is best not to give your baby a dummy before he or she has learnt to breastfeed well (usually not until about 6 weeks old).

**The information contained in, or accessed through, this Website is for your general information and use only and is not intended to be used as medical advice and should not be used to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any medical condition, nor should it be used for therapeutic purposes. The information is not a substitute for independent professional advice and should not be used as an alternative to professional health care. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.**

The content of this fact sheet was provided by the South Australian Government's Children, Youth and Women's Health Service. The South Australian Government does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of this reproduction.