

Congratulations! You're going to be a Grandparent

So you're going to be a grandparent - congratulations!

Naturally, you want the very best for your new grandchild. You would like to pass on advice and the benefit of your wisdom to the new mum. Mum is going to breastfeed and perhaps you don't know an awful lot about it — when your children were small most mums bottle-fed. This leaflet will give you the latest information on breastfeeding so you can feel more confident in supporting mum in her decision to breastfeed your grandchild.

Lots of babies are bottle-fed and turn out OK. What's so good about breastfeeding?

It's true that artificial milk (formula) is adequate — but it has lots of disadvantages compared with mum's breast milk.

- Babies fed formula milk are at greater risk of developing eczema, asthma and other allergies, and are more likely to suffer with ear infections and diarrhoea.
- Formula feeding increases baby's risk of more serious illnesses like diabetes and some cancers.
- Formula-fed babies are more likely to be obese as they get older.
- Formula-fed babies may have an increased risk of cot death.
- Formula milk is harder to digest and gives baby foul smelling bowel movements. Baby is more likely to suffer constipation.
- Bottle-feeding is expensive — milk, bottles and teats, steriliser, bottle bag — they all add up. Breastfeeding requires no special equipment and costs nothing.

Advantages for baby

- Breast milk has exactly the right amount of each nutrient baby needs. Research finds new nutrients in breast milk all the time, and then manufacturers try to add some of these to the artificial milks on the market.
- Breast milk is produced on a demand and supply system. There is always milk ready when baby is hungry or thirsty. Breast milk, and especially the first milk, colostrum, has lots of infection-fighting agents to help baby's immune system.

Advantages for mum

- Breastfeeding is free and it is convenient. No need to pack bottles or find somewhere to warm them whilst out. Breastfeeding can quickly calm a fussy or crying baby.
- Breastfeeding helps mum and baby bond and is enjoyable. There is the sense of satisfaction in mum feeding baby from her own body.
- Breastfeeding makes the womb return to its normal size quickly. Mum gets her figure back faster and can lose the weight she put on in pregnancy without dieting.
- Breastfeeding reduces mum's risk of getting breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.
- Breastfeeding delays the return of mum's periods. Breastfeeding is the perfect way for mum to relax. Sitting or lying down to breastfeed ensures she gets enough rest.

How long should feeds last?

Feeds don't need to be timed. Baby should be left at the breast until he comes off himself. Then he can be winded and offered the other breast (some babies want to feed on both sides at each feed, others don't).

Long feeds will not hurt mum's nipples if baby is attached properly. Baby suckles on the breast itself and breastfeeding shouldn't hurt.

Why are babies demand fed instead of being fed four-hourly?

Breast milk is easily digested so baby will need to feed quite often — usually at least 8 to 12 times a day in the early weeks.

Less frequent feeding can decrease mum's milk supply, impact on baby's weight gain and hydration and increase mum's risk of blocked ducts and mastitis.

Baby needs to feed when he shows hunger signs (rooting, finger sucking). Crying is a last resort. The feeding action causes mum's body to make more milk. The more baby feeds, the more milk will be on tap.

Shouldn't baby be starting solids soon?

Breast milk is all the food baby needs in his first six months. Baby will be getting ready for first tastes of solid foods once he is sitting unsupported, taking food from your plate and feeding himself. This usually happens around six months or later.

Giving any solids or drinks (including formula milk) before six months is linked with later health problems. Introducing solid food early will result in breast milk being replaced by less nutritious first foods and baby gets fewer of mum's antibodies.

Can I give a bottle so mum can rest?

Baby should not be given a bottle or a dummy in the first few weeks while breastfeeding is being established. Sucking on a plastic teat is a very different action to breastfeeding. Baby could get nipple confusion and have problems breastfeeding. There are some suggestions for other ways of helping mum below.

How can I help with my grandchild?

There are lots of ways you can help with your grandchild: cuddling, winding, bathing, and taking him out for a short walk. Any offers of help with housework, making a cup of tea or a meal will probably be gratefully accepted. Perhaps ask mum what she thinks might help.

Encourage mum to be comfortable feeding her baby in your company. Don't make her sit in a bedroom or other private place for feeding — it will make her feel left out of things. Mum will be able to breastfeed without 'exposing herself'.

One of the best ways to help is to support mum in her decision to breastfeed. If mum has a problem, help her to solve it (if necessary with help from a breastfeeding counsellor, midwife or health visitor).

*Nearly all women are **physically capable of breastfeeding** but breastfeeding can sometimes be a struggle without accurate information and without support from close family.*

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Be careful not to undermine mum's decision to breastfeed by suggesting that she gives her baby a bottle. If you can support mum and help her self-confidence, she will be able to give your grandchild the love and care he needs and give him the best possible start by breastfeeding.

You might like to show your support for mum by giving her a gift subscription to the ABM. Her welcome pack will contain all our ABM breastfeeding leaflets and she'll receive our ABM magazine (published three times a year). See contact details below.

Available from ABM:

- Off to a Good Start (NHS Scotland)
- Questions new mothers ask (ABM)
- Dads and breastfeeding (ABM)
- Returning to work whilst breastfeeding (ABM)

**Association of Breastfeeding Mothers
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