

When Breastfeeding isn't Possible

Information on Formula Feeding

As a Baby-Friendly Hospital, BC Women's supports mothers to make informed decisions about their care including about how to feed their babies. We provide evidence based information to help inform women and care that supports the decisions they make. We encourage women to get lots of information during pregnancy about infant feeding. Ask questions of your health care provider, your friends and relatives and have a look at the information posted on the BC Women's website. Your bedside nurse is also a good resource once you have your baby.



Some mothers need to, or decide to, formula feed their babies. Although the majority of mothers are able to breastfeed if they choose to, about 5% of women will not be able to exclusively breastfeed their child or children no matter how hard they try. Breast reduction surgery, hormonal issues, and breasts that do not change at all during pregnancy may limit the amount of milk a mother has for her baby. Women who have experienced sexual abuse may find breastfeeding very difficult, others find it healing. Some mothers just don't like the idea of breastfeeding. And sometimes although the woman does "all the right things" as far as initiating breastfeeding her body does not cooperate. This can be a very difficult situation for a mother. Getting good support is important.

Whether you are physically unable to breastfeed or chose not to, how you feed your baby is a personal decision and not one you have to justify to anyone. Give your baby lots of

skin-to-skin cuddling, hold your baby as much as you want and enjoy feeding your baby. Here is some information about using formula.

What do I need to know before I start formula feeding?

All healthy babies, no matter how they are fed need to be allowed to decide how much food they need to consume. This is called responsive feeding. Babies give signs when they are hungry and when they are full.

When bottle feeding a young baby, start with small amounts in a small bottle. Let the baby decide when to stop eating – resist the temptation to “finish the bottle”. A young baby using a large bottle is more likely to drink more than they need. Newborns on their first day of life eat very small amounts, 5-10 ml to start and gradually increase their feedings to a few ounces by day 3 or 4. Babies, like all humans vary in the amount of food they need. Your baby’s behaviour, wet and dirty diapers as well as weight gain will help you decide whether they are getting enough food. Check out this information on the Healthy Families BC website which gives information about where to get formula, what type to buy, supplies, cleaning equipment and how to feed your baby. Check out: *Feeding your baby formula: before you start* found at:

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/formula-before-you-start>

How do I choose prepare and store formula?

Here’s more information from the Healthy Families website on “*How to choose, prepare and store infant formula.*”

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/how-choose-prepare-and-store-infant-formula>

What if I want to “mix feed” – give breast and bottle?

If you wish to breastfeed and give formula, try to establish breastfeeding first. If you start out doing both your body will not make much milk and you may not have the choice to continue to breastfeed. Ask your health nurse about introducing formula after you are home from the hospital.

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/what-you-need-know-about-supplementing-your-baby-formula>

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/learn-more-you-supplement-formula>

What if I need to supplement my breastfed baby with formula?

If your breastfed baby needs formula ensure you have a feeding plan before you leave the hospital including who to contact for follow up and assistance. The public health nurse at your local health unit can be a great resource to help you figure out whether your baby still needs formula and how much formula to give.

Check out. <https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/all-about-supplementing>