

FEEDING GUIDE

This guide explains the various different ways in which you can feed your baby, and what types of equipment you will need.

Introduction

There are various ways to feed your baby:

- **Breastfeeding**

Where possible, this is considered the best start you can give your baby and it is recommended that you breastfeed exclusively for the first 6 months. Breast milk is natural, full of all the vitamins your baby needs and best of all, it's free!

- **Bottle Feeding**

If you are unable to breastfeed, or choose not to, bottle feeding is an alternative. Bottles can be used to feed the baby either formula or expressed breast milk.

Bottle feeding also offers your partner an opportunity to feed the baby, and it can be used to give expressed breast milk to your baby, allowing you more flexibility.

- **Expressing**

Expressing is simply a way of taking milk from your breast, without the baby suckling.

Expressed feeds offer greater flexibility enabling someone else to feed the baby. This also offers your partner a chance to feed the baby allowing your partner more involvement.

Expressed milk can also be kept as back up when your supply is low or you're away from your baby. It's also a way of increasing your milk supply when your baby goes through a growth spurt (although breastfeeding your baby more regularly will do this too). If you don't intend to breastfeed exclusively this is also a means of introducing your baby to a bottle

Expressed milk can be frozen in milk tubs and kept up to 6 months, or kept in the fridge for up to 5 days (the fridge temperature must be 4 degrees C or lower for this). However, breast milk retains more nutritional value if it is not frozen. If you do freeze it, ensure it's properly thawed to keep as much nutritional value as possible – defrosting quickly in a microwave or on the hob will destroy much of the goodness.

What you will need

Below you will find guidance on the equipment you need depending on how you plan to feed your baby.

Breast Feeding

In order to breastfeed comfortably you will need:

- **Breast pads** - these are available as either disposable or reusable. You may need to try a couple to find a brand that best fits your breast.
- **Nipple cream** is essential. Some people are lucky enough not to have problems with breastfeeding, but most will have some discomfort to begin with. Applying nipple cream after every feed will help.
- **Breastfeeding scarf or shawl** – this enables you to breastfeed in public discreetly and helps stop your baby being distracted while feeding. You can use either a normal scarf, a large muslin or a specially designed scarf.

- **Bibs and muslins** will help protect baby clothes. Babies tend to bring up a small amount of milk after a feed so you may find breastfeeding messy at times. Soft cloth bibs are most comfortable for babies whilst breastfeeding.
- **Nipple shields** may be helpful if you experience a lot of discomfort while feeding your baby.

Bottle Feeding

Various bottles and teats are available, and you will need to try a couple of brands to see which your baby prefers.

- **Basic bottles** are inexpensive, widely available and normally come with teats and lids. However, basic bottles may allow babies to swallow air while feeding, which can cause discomfort. For health and safety reasons it is worth getting BPA-free bottles.
- **Anti colic bottles** are designed to reduce the amount of air swallowed by the baby when feeding and this can help reduce symptoms of colic or any other discomfort caused by feeding. These bottles do tend to be more expensive and don't work for all babies.
- **Steriliser bottles** are designed to be sterilised in the microwave which saves you buying extra sterilising equipment. However, they are more expensive than basic bottles.
- **Disposable bottles** are ready-sterilised and come with a teat and a lid. They are handy when travelling or out and about, but they are not a cheap option especially if you expect to bottle feed 100% of the time.
- **Teats** come in various "flow" sizes and are made of either silicone or latex. Silicone is less flexible than latex but more durable. You can choose between a standard shape and a natural one, which mimics the shape of a nipple. Anti-colic teats are also available, as are disposable teats for single use while out and about.

In order to fit correctly, teats and bottles usually need to be of the same brand as they are all slightly different shapes and sizes.

You will need slow flow teats for a newborn before upgrading to medium flow once your baby is feeding confidently. If you have a hungry baby or a good feeder, you may be able to move up to a fast flow or flexi flow - flexi-flow teats allow your baby to adjust the flow of the milk through sucking the teat.

Once you have established a brand of bottle and teat that suits your baby, you will need:

- **6 bottles and 6 teats** - it's easier to have a clean bottle to hand rather than wash one up at 2am when you have a crying, hungry baby! Ensure you establish a brand your baby likes before stocking up.
- **Bottle and teat brush** for cleaning
- **Sterilising equipment** (see below)

Formula

As with teats and bottles, you will need to try a few brands of formula milk to see which your baby prefers. There are three different types of formula:

- Cow's milk-based formula
- Hydrolysed protein formula
- Soya-based formula

Most mothers choose a cow's milk based formula unless, due to health reasons, their doctor suggests otherwise. If you think your baby is allergic to, or intolerant of cow's milk, consult your doctor or health visitor.

If you feed your baby formula from birth, you normally begin with a stage 1 formula and move on to stage 2 as your baby gets bigger, or if you have a very hungry baby. Later on you can buy Good Night formula which is said to help babies sleep longer and keep them fuller. However, these contain cereal products and should not be used for babies under 6 months. From 12 months babies can have cows milk (full fat) but Follow On and Growing Up formula milk is also available and contains added vitamins.

Most formulas are sold as dry milk powder which is then mixed with cooled, boiled water. Ready-made formula (which is already mixed) is also available in small packs for travel, or larger packs to keep in the fridge. However, it is much more expensive.

Ready-made formula can be kept open in the fridge for up to 24 hours, but powdered formula should be made up just before each feed as powdered milk is not sterile and bacteria can build up over just a few hours. If you are out and about, or your baby is at nursery, it's best to take a vacuum flask containing just-boiled water - this will keep the water hot for about four hours. Take some small, sterilised containers, each with the right amount of formula powder so you can make feeds up individually.

Babies generally like milk to be at least body temperature and you can ensure this by warming a bottle of formula in a bottle warmer, or cup of hot water, or by using a flask to keep boiled water. Always test the milk temperature before feeding your baby.

Once you have chosen a formula to suit your baby, you will need:

- **Approximately one 900g tub of formula a week** depending on how many feeds and how much milk your baby is taking. The amount of formula your baby needs will increase as your baby grows until you start weaning at around 6 months. Once you start weaning your baby onto solids the amount of milk needed will slowly decrease.

Expressing

If you plan to express feeds, you will need:

- **Breast pump** – whilst expressing can be done by hand, it's tricky and time consuming, so it's worth investing in a breast pump. Manual and electric pumps are available, as are pumps with both manual and electric capabilities. If you plan to express regularly, an electric pump saves a great deal of time.
- **Bottles and teats** (see above for details of bottles and teats available)
- **Bottle and teat brush**
- **Sterilising equipment** (see below)

Sterilising

For the first 12 months anything used to feed your baby (including bottle and teat brushes), and anything that goes in the baby's mouth (including dummies), must be sterilised. This is to kill germs and bacteria. Sterilising is particularly important if you use formula milk as bacteria is very dangerous in small babies.

There are four options:

- **Boiling** – this involves immersing everything in a pan of water and boiling for ten minutes. You then cover with a lid and everything will remain sterile for 3 hours. **You will need a new saucepan.** This makes boiling an economical option, but you will permanently have a pan of bottles on your hob, and teats will need to be replaced more often.

- **Steaming** – sterilisers in the form of steaming units are available to buy and take 10 minutes to steam bottles, teats and dummies. As long as the lid stays on everything will remain sterile for 6 hours.
You will need a steriliser; these can be costly and take up considerable space in the kitchen.
 - **Microwave sterilising** – containers are available to sterilise equipment in the microwave, and, as long as the lid remains on, everything will remain sterile for 6 hours. With this option all your feeding equipment must be microwave safe, and care should be taken when removing containers from the microwave as they will be extremely hot.
You will need sterilising bags or containers.
 - **Cold water sterilising** – with this method everything is soaked in a container with non-toxic sterilising liquid. This is a fairly cheap option and everything remains sterile for 24 hours if the lid is on. Teats and bottles will last longer with this method, and it is an easy way to sterilise equipment when travelling.
You will need a container and non-toxic sterilising liquid.
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You can find more information about feeding on these sites:

Breastfeeding

<http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/breastfeeding/Pages/breastfeeding.aspx>

Bottle feeding

<http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/birthtofive/Pages/bottle-feeding.aspx>