

Supplementary feeds for breastfed babies

Information for patients and carers

Supplementary feeds are extra milk feeds given to a breastfed baby for medical reasons. If your baby needs supplementary feeds, your expressed breastmilk (EBM) is the best choice. If there is not enough EBM available, supplementary formula feeds may be needed. Once your breastmilk supply increases, your EBM will be used instead of formula, if supplementary feeds are still needed.

Reasons for supplementary feeds.

Common Medical Reasons

- The baby is unwell, such as showing signs of dehydration. (E.g. dry lips and tongue).
- The mother is unwell and/or unable to provide enough breastmilk.
- The baby has lost too much weight or is not gaining enough weight.
- The baby has low blood sugars.
- The baby was born pre-term.
- Other medical reasons where extra milk feeds are prescribed.

Parents' Choice

Sometimes for various reasons a mother may feel that wants to supplement her breastfed baby with infant formula.

Staff respect the right of parents to make this choice but it is important to talk with a midwife or nurse first so we can offer you the right information, support and extra help with breastfeeding.

Possible effects of supplementary formula feeds.

Breastfeeding works on a supply and demand basis. The more breastmilk your baby takes, the more breastmilk your breasts will make. When your baby is given supplementary formula feeds, your breasts may have less stimulation. This means less milk may be made.

It is important that your breasts are suckled frequently. If breastfeeds are missed or replaced by supplementary formula feeds, your breasts can become too full and painful. This is known as engorgement. Your breasts will make less breastmilk if they are too full.

Supplementary formula feeds given to a newborn can interfere with the protection against infection that breastmilk is creating in the baby's gut.

Around 1 to 3 percent of all babies given formula may develop an allergy to cow's milk protein.

Why do we ask you to sign a consent form for supplementary formula feeds?

Staff will only suggest supplementary formula if there are medical reasons for extra milk and there is not enough of your own breastmilk. It is important that parents know these reasons. Because this is a medical treatment, we ask for written parental consent.

If you choose to offer supplementary formula without a medical reason, we also ask you to sign a consent form. This is to make sure that you have been provided with the right information to make your decision.



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What type of supplementary formula is used?

Standard cow's milk based infant formula is used for full-term babies. Pre-term babies and those with special feeding needs may be given special formulas.

Please let staff know if there is a strong history of cows milk protein allergy in either parent or siblings so use of an alternative formula can be considered.

Minimising the possible effects on breastfeeding of giving supplementary formula feeds

- If your baby is able to breastfeed, keep offering breastfeeds whenever baby shows interest in feeding. Always offer a breastfeed before giving a supplementary formula feed.
- If your baby was born early, you can increase the amount of breastfeeding as baby grows.
- Supplement with your own EBM to minimise the potential for cows' milk protein allergy, and to maintain the protective effects of breastmilk.
- Express your breasts frequently to build and maintain your breastmilk supply and prevent engorgement. Hospital staff will teach you how to express.
- Regular skin to skin contact with your baby is a great way to help establish breastfeeding and increase your supply.

How are supplementary feeds given?

While breastfeeding is being established we recommend avoiding the use of bottles and teats. This is because some babies may start to prefer the teat and then have difficulty feeding from the breast.

Supplementary feeds can be given by cup, spoon, syringe, 'finger feeding' or tube feeding. The method chosen will depend on your baby's age, medical needs, and the amount of feed needed. Staff will discuss this with you and advise you about the best options for your baby.

Sometimes a supplementary feed needs to be given by a bottle and teat. Staff can support you to maintain breastfeeding during this time. It is also your choice if you prefer to give supplementary feeds by bottle and teat.

Useful contacts:

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)

24 hour helpline

Ph. 1800 686 268

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Ballarat Health Service Breastfeeding Clinic

Ph. 0439981937

Parent Place Breastfeeding Support

Cnr Sturt and Albert Streets, Ballarat Central

Ph. 0439981937

Ballarat Health Service Maternity Unit

Ph. 53204971

24 Hour Maternal and Child Health Line

Ph. 132229.

