



**Mother's milk
is the most
natural of all**



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■ Breastfeeding the natural way

What happens to your baby during its first year of life has a major impact on its future health.

Breastfeeding gives your baby all the nutrients it needs for the first six years of life, and will also be of importance later on. It helps protect from infections and reduces the probability of developing certain illness in the years to come.

Artificial milk is made using cow's milk with the addition of other ingredients, it contains no substances that can protect your baby from infections and illnesses.

Only you can produce these, with your milk.

Maternal breastfeeding helps bring you and your baby closer, both physically and emotionally.

So while you're breastfeeding, your bond becomes more and more solid.

While breastfeeding, it's not necessary to eat anything in particular or to exclude any types of food, however it is a good idea, as always, to follow a healthy balanced diet that is rich in fruit and vegetables.

What does breastfeeding protect from?

Your milk is perfect and inimitable for your baby's growth requirements. Breastfeeding your baby offers major advantages for its and your health. Each day is important and the longer you breastfeed your baby the greater the effects will be for both of you. Babies that are not breastfed are much more likely to:

- suffer from diarrhoea, vomiting and infections of the urinary tract, and spend more time in hospital;
- suffer from otitis;
- refuse new food and different flavours;
- be constipated;
- tend to be overweight and obese, which means a greater risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and other adult diseases;
- suffer from eczema.

Breastfeeding has positive effects for mothers, families and the community:

- it protects mothers from cancer of the breast and ovaries, and from osteoporosis when elderly;
- for mothers who breastfeed it is easier to lose the excess pounds gained during pregnancy because producing milk burns around 500 extra calories every day;
- a clear economic saving: the cost of artificial milk and the paraphernalia necessary to prepare it have a major impact on the family budget.

■ Getting close... right away

Maintaining **skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth**, calms the baby, regulates its breathing, and keeps it warm.

This is a good moment to start breastfeeding, your baby will be vigilant and will usually want to attach itself at your breast just a couple of hours after birth. A trained health worker can help you with the first breastfeeding sessions.

Moreover, it's important to know that the first milk which arrives immediately after birth, colostrum, is precious for a newborn, since it's full of carbohydrate, protein, and antibodies, and is highly digestible. The amount of colostrum is limited but as we've said, it's extremely nutritious. The proper "mature milk", usually arrives a few days after birth.

■ Together always

Your baby will feel safer if you hold it close (**rooming in**), offering it your breast every time it shows the first signs of hunger, and this will also help your body produce the necessary milk. Attaching the baby at your breast every time it asks is important, since the suction stimulates the hormones, prolactin and oxytocin, thanks to which the breast's glands produce milk. Take advantage of these few days in hospital to get to know your child and ask the health workers if you're not sure about anything.

How to breastfeed

What position should I use?

Get comfortable! It's best to find a position you feel comfortable in before starting to breastfeed, even though you can change it if need be once the baby is attached to the breast. Many positions are suitable for breastfeeding. Just make sure that:

The baby's head and body are in a straight line.

If not, the baby might not be able to swallow the milk easily.

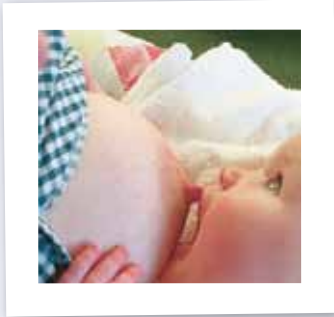
The baby is well supported close to your body.

Support its back, shoulders and neck. The baby must be able to move its head back to attach itself correctly.

The baby's nose is in front of the nipple.

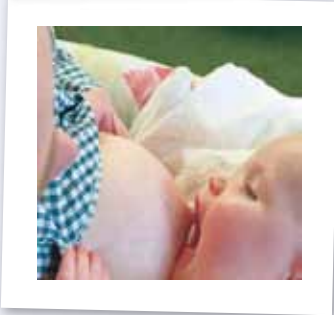
Check that not only the nipple, but also most of the areola, especially the lower part, enters the baby's mouth. If the baby's nose is at the level of the nipple, a firm attachment to the breast will be easier.

■ How to breastfeed your baby



Hold it close to you with its nose in front of your nipple. Let your baby push its head back so that its upper lip brushes the nipple.

This movement will help your baby to open its mouth wide.



When the mouth is wide open, the first thing its chin will touch is your breast. The baby's head is tilted backwards so that its tongue can cover as much of the breast as possible.



With the chin very close to the breast, the nose free, the mouth wide open, more of the top of the areola will be visible than the bottom.

Its cheeks must be nice and round while it is sucking.

**Every kind of breast is fine.
The shape and size don't count!**

■ Summing up

- Your baby has a good amount of breast in its mouth (not just the nipple);
- the chin is “sunk” well into the breast;
- you feel no pain when it sucks (apart from the first few sucks which can seem more energetic);
- if the dark skin (areola) around the nipple is visible, you should see more above the baby's upper lip than below the lower one;
- the baby's cheeks are nice and round during suction; it alternates long sucks followed by swallowing (it's perfectly normal if it pauses every now and again);
- it detaches itself from the breast on its own when it has finished feeding.



Breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed your baby

If you've interrupted your breastfeeding session, it's possible to begin again even if it can be difficult. Adding artificial milk to the diet of a breastfed baby reduces milk production.

Never give your baby other food or drink

The more you breastfeed your baby the more milk you will produce.

Giving other food or liquids apart from maternal milk will reduce milk production.

Reducing the amount of milk the baby drinks also reduces the protective effects of breastfeeding.

Never give your baby solid food before it's ready (normally when it's six months old).

Make sure it's properly attached at your breast

If it's not attached in the right way, the nipple can become painful, or fissures – small cuts, may easily appear. Sometimes other problems can occur, for example obstructions or mastitis, when the breast can become swollen, reddened and very painful. In these cases it's a good idea to consult a health worker at the birthing unit, clinic, or support group to help resolve the problem.

Don't use a pacifier

Babies that use a pacifier can find it difficult to attach themselves at the breast. They may ask for the breast less frequently, because the pacifier satisfies their desire to suck.

Signs that a baby is eating enough are:

in the first 48 hours after birth, the baby will only wet 2-3 diapers. The wet diapers will increase in number until they reach a minimum of six a day after the 5th day of life. In the beginning the baby's stools will be blackish and sticky (meconium), from the third day they will become greenish and less sticky. From the 4th day and for the first few weeks the baby will pass at least 3 lots of yellowish stools every day.

After the first month, stooling can become less frequent. Remember that it's perfectly normal if the stools are liquid. The baby will regain its birth weight after the first two weeks. Neither the breast nor the nipples should become sore. If you feel any pain, seek help. Your baby will look content and satisfied after most feeding sessions and will let go of the breast on its own.

Don't hesitate to ask for help

It might take a while before you feel confident. You can ask a health worker at the birthing unit, the clinic, or a support group to help you with breastfeeding.

How to collect maternal milk

What does “collecting milk” mean?

It means drawing milk from the breast. You can squeeze the milk out manually, or use a manual or electric breast pump. According to your own needs, you might get on better with one kind of breast pump rather than another. Ask for information from a health worker at the birthing unit, clinic or a support group before deciding to buy one. The breast pump must be cleaned and sterilized every time it's used.

Why bother “collecting milk”?

If you collect your own milk, your baby will be able to have maternal milk even if someone else administers it. This can be useful if you're far from your baby or if you need to go back to work. It's best to have begun breastfeeding before letting your milk be given by someone else.

When should I squeeze the breast by hand?

If your breasts are too full.

If your baby is not sucking well and you want to give it your milk.

If you don't want to buy and use an electric breast pump.

In the first few days after birth it's more efficient to use manual pumping since the colostrum is only available in small amounts.

Manual pumping stimulates emission of milk: get comfortable, relax and think of your baby, or look at it. Warm the breast by massaging it gently. Gently twist the nipples between fingers and thumb. (When you've become familiar with this practice, you may no longer need to stimulate the emission of the milk).

Gently feel the breast around 4cm or 1½ inches away from the nipple, until you can identify a part of the breast that has a different consistency. Once you've found this point, form a C with your thumb and forefinger (the thumb above and the forefinger below). Then support the breast with the other fingers.

- Gently push the thumb and forefinger towards the wall of the thorax. Then press the thumb against the index finger, squeezing the breast. Release the pressure and repeat the movements several times until the milk starts to flow; this could take a few minutes. Afterwards, the milk may squirt or gush out;
- when the flow of milk slows, rotate the fingers around the edge of the areola, towards another part of the breast and repeat the same manoeuvres. When the milk stops flowing, move to the other breast, in the same way. If necessary, you can go from one breast to the other several times.
- If no milk comes out, try moving the fingers closer to or further away from the nipple, or try a gentle massage.

■ How to store your milk

Remember to use a clean container to store your milk in. Before putting the container with your pressed milk into the ice or freezer compartment of the fridge, attach a label to it with the date of pressing.

Keep your milk in the fridge (2-4°C), putting it at the back and never inside the door, and use it promptly, preferably within 5 days, but never beyond 8 days. Any milk not used right away can be kept for 2 weeks in the ice compartment or for a maximum of 6 months in the freezer. Freeze your milk in the fridge.

Once it has thawed, use it immediately or throw it away.

You can warm the milk to a temperature of around 37°C before giving it to your baby. Never use a microwave as it heats unevenly (and so can scald the baby's mouth) and also changes some of the milk's components.

■ Breastfeeding at work? Why not?

Going back to work doesn't mean the end of breastfeeding. With a little foresight and collaboration you'll be able to successfully reconcile breastfeeding with working, regardless of how many hours you do. If you go back to work when breastfeeding has become routine it will be much easier.

You can efficiently extract milk manually or by using a quality breast pump during a rest break.

It may prove useful to start extracting milk some days before going back to work, and to build up a stock of milk. If possible, when you extract milk at work, take a cooler bag with you to keep it in until you go home, if it's not possible to put it in a fridge. Lastly, don't forget that you can ask your employer to work flexitime, which will let you breastfeed during the daily rest breaks you are legally entitled to (see box below).

Hot tip: take a change of shirt and bra to work in case milk gets spilt.

Protection of women in the event of maternity is regulated by Italian Law (Law no. 151 of 26 March 2001).

Working women have the right to maternity leave for a total of 5 months, from 2 months before the expected date of childbirth up to 3 months after, and in the case of good health, from the start of the ninth month until the baby is 4 months old.

On returning to work, a working mother is entitled to two hours a day of rest time during the first year after birth if the working day is at least six hours long; otherwise the rest break is reduced to one hour.

A working father can only exercise this right where the mother does not take it.

For a mother of twins rest breaks are doubled and the additional hours can also be enjoyed by the father, if necessary, at the same time as the mother.

Mother's milk for all babies

If your baby has to go into hospital it's important to begin drawing milk as soon as possible after birth. To guarantee adequate milk production, you'll need to pump at least eight times in 24 hours, also during the night. If you're freezing maternal milk because your baby is premature or ill, ask staff for advice.

Ask hospital staff if you can hold your baby skin-to-skin. This strengthens your bond and helps maintain milk production.

Baby Friendly Initiatives: being able to breastfeed and being made welcome... everywhere

The Baby Friendly Initiatives are a global programme of the World Health Organization and UNICEF to encourage healthcare systems to improve care for mothers and babies, so that breastfeeding is possible for the first 6 months of life and can continue for as long as the mother and baby wish. UNICEF Italy's Hospital & Community Baby-Friendly Initiative offers material for education and support to achieve minimum standards in care for mothers and babies. Once all the standards have been achieved, companies can be assessed and recognized as Baby Friendly.

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly

Visit the sites www.unicef.it Ospedali e comunità amici dei bambini and www.regione.lazio.it/lattematerno/ where you'll find further information on the services available.

Other information on:

MAMI – Movimento Allattamento Materno Italiano, www.mami.org

AICPAM – Associazione Italiana Consulenti Professionali in Allattamento Materno, www.aicpam.org

LLL – La Leche League Italia, www.lllitalia.org

Associazione Culturale Pediatri, www.acp.it

Progetto Nazionale Genitoripiù, www.genitoripiu.it

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Find out more on salutelazio.it