

Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

Breastfeeding Your Baby

Breastfeeding is the natural and healthiest way to feed your baby.

The Rights of Those Breastfeeding

Just as it is illegal to discriminate against a woman because she is, was, or may become pregnant; it is also illegal to discriminate against a woman because she is breastfeeding.

Women have the right to [breastfeed anywhere, anytime](#) and are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

A woman who is breastfeeding and returning to work also has the right under the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#) to be accommodated in the workplace so that she can continue to breastfeed her baby. She needs to discuss this with her employer.

Baby-Friendly Initiative

Renfrew County and District Health Unit is committed to endorsing the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI). BFI supports all families regardless of feeding method. How to feed your baby is one of the many important decisions you will make as a parent. To help make an informed decision about how to feed your baby, you need good quality information.

How to know your health care provider is supporting you to make an informed decision regarding infant feeding:

- What you already know about breastfeeding is taken into consideration.
- The benefits of breastfeeding are communicated.
- The challenges to breastfeeding success that some women experience are explored.
- Risks related to infant feeding are discussed before challenges happen.
- Questions are encouraged and answered correctly.
- The information provided is current and evidence-based.
- The information is free from commercial influence through advertisements.
- Your feelings, wishes and concerns are valued and respected.

For personal or medical reasons, some families make an informed decision to use formula. If you have decided to formula feed your baby and need information on how to prepare it safely, please visit the [Feeding Your Baby](#) section of our website for more information.



Breastfeeding is important. It is the normal and healthiest way to feed your baby.



A mother's breastmilk is perfectly prepared to be her baby's food for the first 6 months.

Exclusive Breastfeeding

Exclusive breastfeeding means your baby receives only your breast milk. [The Canadian Paediatric Society](#) and [Health Canada](#) both recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life.

Remember the first six weeks is a learning period for both you and your baby. To establish successful breastfeeding, avoid artificial nipples (such as pacifiers and bottles) during this time.

Why do experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding?

For Babies

- A mother's breast milk is perfectly prepared to be her baby's only food for the first six months.
- Breast milk contains immune factors that will help your baby fight germs.
- Your breast milk will change as your baby grows.
- Breast milk coats the inside of your baby's stomach and intestines reducing the risk of infection.
- Babies who are exclusively breastfed stay healthier than babies who are given both formula and breast milk.

For Mothers

- Exclusive breastfeeding gives greater protection for mothers against breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.
- More calories are used in making breast milk, helping mothers lose pregnancy weight more quickly.
- Mothers who exclusively breastfeed often go longer without a menstrual period. Exclusive breastfeeding can provide some natural form of birth control by following the [Lactational Amenorrhea Method](#).
- Stops you from bleeding too much after birth.
- It's free.

Health risks of artificial baby milk (formula):

Formula feeding changes the lining in your baby's stomach and does not offer any immune protection for your baby.

Babies are at a higher risk for:

- Infections
- Stomach and gut issues (colitis/celiac disease)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Some childhood cancers
- Obesity and chronic diseases later in life (i.e. diabetes, heart disease)
- Allergies
- Infection due to contamination or preparation error

Getting Started With Breastfeeding

Build your circle of breastfeeding support

Breastfeeding is a skill and may take time to learn. Renfrew County and District Health Unit will provide you with information about breastfeeding as well as where to get breastfeeding support in your community.



Dad can snuggle skin-to-skin too!

Skin-to-skin contact for you and your baby

Bringing your baby [skin-to-skin](#) right after he is born is a natural way of welcoming him. Use gentle touch and soft words. Your health care provider will dry your baby and place him on your chest with a warm blanket over his back to snuggle with you. Dad can snuggle skin-to-skin too. Research has shown that skin-to-skin is the best place for your baby to adjust to life in the outside world. Babies born prematurely benefit from skin-to-skin too, also known as kangaroo care.

Benefits of skin-to-skin during the first hour

- Babies are warmer and calmer; they cry less and have more restful sleep.
- Babies' heart rates and blood sugars are more stable.
- Skin-to-skin babies follow a natural sequence of movements toward mom's breast. They are drawn by smell, touch and taste to mom's nipple, providing the best start to breastfeeding.
- The maternal hormone oxytocin is stimulated by skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding. It relaxes mom, helps her uterus to contract normally and her breast milk to flow.
- Skin-to-skin helps develop a secure emotional attachment between you and your baby that will last a lifetime.
- Reduces pain from painful procedures such as the heel-prick test or blood collection.

Skin-to-skin beyond the first hour

Skin-to-skin is a natural and healthy way to take time out of your busy day to relax and enjoy your new baby. Continue making time to snuggle skin-to-skin with your baby. It will help keep your baby interested in breastfeeding if he is sleepy and continues the positive effects of bonding.

Managing your milk supply

In the Beginning



Colostrum is concentrated so your baby needs small amounts. It contains antibodies that protect your baby from illness, and coats the inside of your baby's stomach and intestines, reducing the risk of infection.

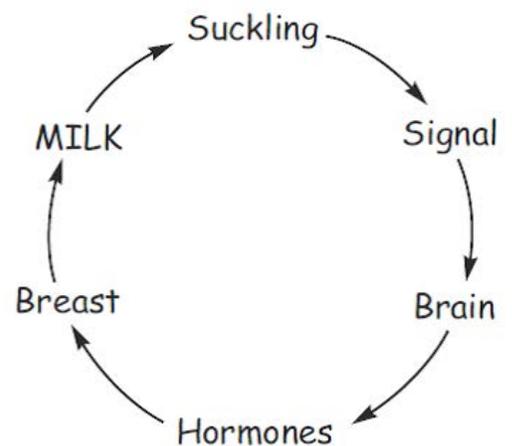
- During the first hour after birth, cuddle your baby skin-to-skin.
- Watch for cues that he is ready to breastfeed:
 - Opening his mouth;
 - Turning towards and touching your nipple; or
 - Putting hands to his mouth.
- Accommodate your baby's cues so that he will breastfeed and receive the important first food called colostrum.

Colostrum

- Is concentrated so your baby only needs small amounts.
- Contains antibodies that protect your baby from illness.
- Coats the inside of your baby's stomach and intestines, reducing the risk of infection.

Your body is designed to make milk

- Breastfeed often. Hormones in your body will send a signal to your breasts to make the transition from colostrum to mature milk.
- The more your baby sucks at your breast with a [good latch](#), the more breast milk you will make.
- Some women describe the "let down" of milk as a tingling sensation.



When mature milk comes in:

- Your breasts will feel warm and full (usually after two or three days).
- Continue to feed your baby frequently (at least 8 times in 24 hours).
- Your body will naturally know how to balance your milk supply with your baby's needs.

Growth Spurts

These are times when your baby is growing quickly and will need to breastfeed more often.

They happen at about:

- 3 weeks;
- 6 weeks;
- 3 months; and
- 6 months.

These growth spurts usually last for a few days.



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Tip: Track your baby's feedings, wet diapers and stools using the Breastfeeding Log (the first pdf on page 87 in the Gift of Motherhood).

How can I be sure my baby will get enough breast milk?

Signs that your baby is getting enough:

- Her mouth is wet.
- Her eyes are bright and alert.
- She shows feeding cues and latches well.
- She comes off the breast looking content.
- She has enough wet diapers and stools.
- She has alert, calm periods as well as periods of being active.
- Your breasts feel softer and less full after a feeding.

Also refer to this [helpful chart](#) for more information.

Why do mothers sometimes think they don't have enough breast milk?

Frequent feeding

- Newborns have small stomachs that fill up and empty quickly. They need to feed often, sometimes every one to two hours.
- Babies have growth spurts and want to breastfeed more frequently during these times to increase milk supply to meet their needs.

Shorter breastfeeds

As babies get stronger and more efficient at the breast, they feed more quickly and this is normal.

Breasts don't feel as full

- A few days after your baby is born your breasts may be very full as mature breast milk is replacing colostrum. Frequent feedings help to decrease this fullness.
- As your baby breastfeeds with a good latch, your milk production will adjust to match the amount of milk your baby needs and your breasts will not feel as full. This is normal.

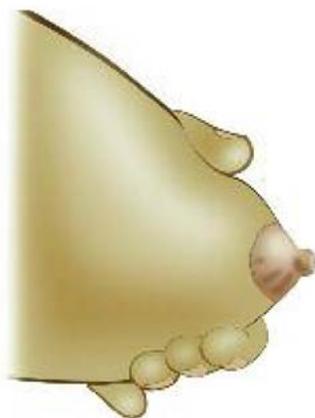
You don't get much milk from pumping

- Your baby is much better at taking milk from your breasts than hand expression or a breast pump. This is normal.
- Crying and not sleeping
- Babies cry and awaken for many reasons, not necessarily due to hunger.

More information: See the online tab called Your New Baby.



You may wish to ask for help when learning to do this or if you are unable to hand express.



Hand Expression

[Hand Expression](#) is the removal of breast milk from the breast (usually done by hand) by the mother herself. You may wish to ask for help when learning to do this or if you are unable to hand express on your own.

Why Hand Expression Is Important?

- You can use a few drops of expressed breastmilk to get your baby interested in breastfeeding.
- It softens your breasts if they are very full which will help your baby latch and to make your breasts feel comfortable.
- It helps you to express breastmilk if you need to be away from your baby.
- It helps increase milk supply.

How to Hand Express:

1. Collect equipment:
 - Wide-mouthed BPA-free container, cup, or spoon to collect the expressed milk.
 - Warm wet towel (optional)
2. Remove your bra and any restrictive clothing.
3. Wash hands thoroughly.
4. Choose an environment and position that are relaxing to encourage milk flow and expression. Many mothers find it easier to express in the morning, when their breasts feel fullest or after breastfeeding baby.
5. Place warm wet towel on your breast and/or massage gently to encourage breast milk to flow.
6. Hold a wide mouth container, cup or spoon below the nipple.
7. Place thumb on top of breast and first two fingers underneath about 1" to 1 ½" back from the nipple.
8. Push thumb and two fingers gently back toward chest wall.
9. Roll thumb and fingers forward, as if making thumb/fingerprints at the same time.
10. Repeat, moving thumb and fingers around the breast; position, press back and roll forward.
11. When milk flow slows, switch to the other breast and repeat sequence of position, press back and roll.
12. When first learning to hand express, only a few drops may be obtained. Practice and experience will increase your flow and help you to determine how long you need to express at one time.
13. If your baby has not yet latched on and fed, you can feed the baby the expressed breastmilk using a cup or spoon.
14. Store and use breastmilk according to [Breastfeeding Matters](#).