

Can I give a bottle so mum can rest?

Unless there's a medical reason, it is recommended that babies are not given a bottle or a dummy in the first few weeks while breastfeeding is being established. Sucking on an artificial teat is a very different action to breastfeeding and can cause breastfeeding problems for some babies. If someone suggests to a new mum that baby needs a bottle, this can undermine a mum's confidence in her ability to breastfeed. The new mum will need support, and there are lots of other things that you can do.

Nearly all women are physically capable of breastfeeding but breastfeeding can sometimes be hard without accurate information and without support from close family.

Common Myths

Mums used to be told all kinds of things, such as 'Nipples need to toughen up so it is bound to hurt', 'Red-headed women will have more pain'. We know that these things are not true.

New mums may be particularly sensitive to negative comments, and family support can make the world of difference to her at this vulnerable time. Positivity and encouragement can really help build her confidence in her ability to provide for her little one.

It can feel hard when someone makes different parenting choices to our own and seeing someone breastfeed can bring up all kinds of memories for us. If you would like to talk through your own experiences, an ABM Breastfeeding Counsellor will be glad to listen.

How can I help with my grandchild?

You have a key role to play. Ask mum what she would like. You could cuddle baby while mum has a shower, wind, bathe and take them out for a short walk. Help with housework, making a cup of tea or a meal will probably be accepted gratefully. Breastfeeding can be thirsty work - you could make sure that mum has a drink to hand when she feeds. Just being with mum and encouraging her while she finds her feet is very supportive and confidence-boosting.

Encourage mum to be comfortable breastfeeding in your company, so she knows that you support her decision to breastfeed. If mum experiences a breastfeeding problem, you could listen fully to her concerns and perhaps help her to solve it, if necessary, with help from a breastfeeding counsellor, midwife or health visitor.

When you support mum and help her self-confidence, she'll be able to give your grandchild the love and care they need and give them the best possible start by breastfeeding. Whilst it's mum's job to feed the baby, your role could be to look after mum. That's a vital part of the team.

You might like to show your support for mum by giving her a gift subscription to the ABM. Her welcome pack will contain all our ABM breastfeeding leaflets and she'll receive our ABM magazine (published three times a year).

You might like to build your knowledge of breastfeeding with our short online course Team Baby. See our website for more information.

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

registered charity no 280537

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**Congratulations,
you're going to be
a grandparent!**



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Congratulations on becoming a Grandparent!

Naturally, you want the very best for your new grandchild. You'd like to pass on advice and the benefit of your wisdom to the new mum. Mum is going to breastfeed and perhaps you don't know an awful lot about it. Perhaps you didn't get support or help to breastfeed when you became a parent. This leaflet will give you the latest information on breastfeeding, so you can feel more confident in supporting mum in her decision to breastfeed your grandchild. Family support makes a big difference to new mums, so you've got an important role to play.

Why are babies fed on cue?

Breastmilk is easily digested so baby will need to feed at least 8 to 12 times a day in the early weeks. Feeding less often can decrease mum's milk supply, affect baby's weight gain and lead to blocked ducts and mastitis.

Baby needs to feed when they show early hunger signs (rooting, finger sucking). Crying is a last resort. The more baby feeds, the more milk mum will make.

Trying to space feeds, or feed on a schedule can mean that baby doesn't get enough milk. Being told to feed every 3 or 4 hours is one of the reasons that so many mums in the past found that they 'didn't have enough milk'.

Babies may sometimes feed for several hours in a row, hardly coming off at all. This is called 'cluster feeding' and often happens in the evening, though it can happen at any time. Baby is getting fat-rich milk and sending signals to develop mum's milk supply.

Lots of babies are bottlefed and turn out OK. Why breastfeed?

Formula provides adequate basic nutrition for a baby, but it has lots of disadvantages compared with mum's milk.

- Babies fed formula are at greater risk of having ear infections and diarrhoea.
- Formula feeding increases baby's risk of serious illnesses like diabetes and childhood cancers.
- Formula-fed babies are more likely to be obese as they get older.
- Formula-fed babies have an increased risk of SIDS (cot death).
- Formula is harder to digest, and baby is more likely to suffer constipation.
- Bottle-feeding is expensive and time-consuming: milk, bottles, teats, steriliser, bottle bag all add up. It takes time to prepare formula safely, day and night, following current guidelines. Breastfeeding needs no special equipment.

Advantages for mum

- Breastfeeding costs less and can be more convenient. No need to pack bottles or find somewhere to warm them when out. Breastfeeding can quickly calm a crying baby.
- Breastfeeding helps mum and baby bond and is enjoyable. There is a great sense of satisfaction for a mum feeding her baby from her own body.
- Breastfeeding helps the womb return to its normal size quickly after the baby is born and delays the return of mum's periods.
- Breastfeeding reduces mum's risk of getting breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.
- Breastfeeding is a great way for mum to relax. Sitting or lying down to breastfeed makes sure she gets enough rest.

Advantages of Breastfeeding for baby

- Breastmilk has hundreds of components which work together to give a baby everything they need for growth and development. It's a living liquid, and we are constantly finding out more about it. Formula cannot compare with this.
- Breastmilk is produced on a demand and supply system. There is always milk ready when baby is hungry or thirsty. Breastmilk has lots of infection-fighting agents to protect baby, from the first milk (colostrum) to the last drop of milk when weaning.

Shouldn't baby start solids soon?

We now know that breastmilk is all the food baby needs in their first six months. Baby shows that they're ready for solid foods by sitting unsupported, holding food and feeding themselves. This usually happens around six months. Giving any solids or drinks, including formula, before six months is linked with later health problems. Introducing solid food early will mean breastmilk is replaced by less nutritious first foods, and baby gets fewer of mum's antibodies.

And there's no need to give water, either. Even on the hottest day, baby will get all the water they need from breastmilk, as long as they can feed as often as they like.

How long should feeds last?

Feeds don't need to be timed. Baby should be left at the breast until they come off of their own accord. The other breast can then be offered, which may or may not be wanted. Long or frequent feeds are comfortable for mums if baby latches deeply. Breastfeeding's not supposed to hurt. You can encourage mum to get help if she's finding it painful - most breastfeeding problems can be solved with the right help.