

# HOW TO FEED YOUR BABY IT'S YOUR (INFORMED) DECISION



**Congratulations!** You must be excited to welcome your baby. As expectant parents, you need to learn and prepare both physically and psychologically to take on the role of parents. **Learning parenting knowledge and skills** early can help you become happy parents and raise a healthy and lovely baby in a relaxed manner.

How to feed your baby is the first important decision of parenting. Studies show that **quality nutrition for infants and young children** can promote physical growth and brain development, enhance immunity and **bring lifelong health benefits to your child**. Apart from choosing the best nutrition for the baby's growth, the closeness between you and your baby during feeding also helps establish a parent-child bond through understanding his needs and temperament. This is a good start to learning parenting skills.





## **How should I feed my baby to provide optimal nutrition?**

You may feel a bit confused by different suggestions from various sources. The Family Health Service of the Department of Health has prepared the following comprehensive and accurate information based on the [latest scientific evidence](#) for expectant parents to make an informed decision.

# Benefits of breastfeeding to babies

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Breastmilk contains **antibodies**, living cells and other components that can **enhance the baby's immunity**.

Breastmilk is **completely natural** and rich in nutrients. Its composition will adjust according to the needs of the baby's growth at different stages.

Breastmilk contains enzymes that help digestion and absorption. **It also helps the development of the brain, eyes and other organs.**

***Breastfed babies are smarter and healthier!***

The **intimate contact** and interactions between the mother and baby during breastfeeding enhance mother-baby bonding and promote the emotional development of the baby.





The taste of breastmilk changes according what the mother eats. The baby can experience the taste of various foods through breastmilk. This can help him **accept new foods more readily when solids are introduced.**



Breastfeeding saves family expenses, social resources and is **environmentally friendly.**

Your baby takes the lead when breastfeeding. Your body will produce the amount of breastmilk according to his needs. This **reduces** the chance of overfeeding and childhood **obesity** in future.



Breastfeeding **reduces the risk of** **\*sudden, unexpected and unexplained death** of a baby during sleep.



## Benefits of breastfeeding to mothers

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Helps the uterus return to normal size, **reduces the risk** of bleeding and anaemia after childbirth.

Helps to **burn fat** and reduce weight gained during pregnancy.

Long-term breastfeeding **reduces the risks of ovarian and breast cancer.**

Breastfeeding is **convenient** since the baby can be fed anytime and anywhere when the mother is with the baby.



## Concerns about breastfeeding and possible challenges

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- Both you and your baby need time to learn the correct feeding skills.
- In the first month, your baby needs to be fed frequently and you may feel tired. You need support and assistance from your family, friends and healthcare professionals.
- Since you cannot see how much breastmilk your baby had, you may worry that she does not get enough, or you do not produce enough.
- Other factors that may affect breastfeeding :
  - The birthing hospital has not implemented mother-baby-friendly practices.
  - Certain situations when you are separated from your baby because of the health condition of the baby or mother, or when you have to resume work.



**You can always seek advice from your obstetric care provider or other healthcare professionals** if you have any concerns about breastfeeding. Being well prepared before delivery can make breastfeeding easier. If you need more information on breastfeeding, please contact the relevant healthcare professionals, or visit the website of the Family Health Service of the Department of Health.



Love, Starts from Breastfeeding... (booklet)  
<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/ymavo>



Love, Starts from Breastfeeding video clips QR code (booklet)  
<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/6s5u9>



Healthy Eating During Pregnancy and Breastfeeding (booklet)  
<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/e122r>



FAQ on Breastfeeding (online information)  
<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/4kp2t>



An Employee's Guide to Combining Breastfeeding with Work (booklet)  
<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/i9uvr>

*Breastmilk is a gift  
from nature for both the  
mother and baby*



If the mother cannot breastfeed for some particular reason or decides not to breastfeed, then infant formula milk is the only substitute for breastmilk.



### Feeding formula milk:

- allows the baby to be fed by others and the mother can organise her time more flexibly.
- allows family members to have close contact with the baby while feeding. They can also do night feeds.
- makes feeding your baby in public places less inconvenient occasionally when other people are around.
- supplements breastfeeding if exclusive breastfeeding is not feasible after resuming work.

*Some mothers may find formula milk feeding convenient, but in fact it can bring problems mothers should beware of the drawbacks.*

## Disadvantages of feeding babies with formula milk:

### Compared to breastmilk:

- The ingredients of formula milk do not provide optimal nutrition for the baby's growth, including the development of the brain, eyes and other organs.
- Formula-fed babies are more susceptible to allergies (such as eczema and asthma) when compared to breastfed babies. They may be allergic to cow's milk protein.
- Formula milk is more difficult to digest and may cause constipation more often.
- Formula milk is manufactured by refining and processing cow's milk and therefore does not contain antibodies and living immune cells, making the baby more susceptible to infections (such as colds, pneumonia, middle ear infection and diarrhoea).
- Your baby needs to wait for the preparation of formula milk when hungry, so it is not always simple and convenient.

### Formula milk is not sterile:

- Contamination by bacteria or chemical substances can occur during the manufacturing, transportation, storage and milk preparation process.
- The feeding equipment must be disinfected before each feed, and the multi-stepped proper preparation of formula milk must be followed to reduce the risk of formula feeding.

## Problem with feeding babies with formula milk:

- Your baby does not take the lead when bottle feeding. If the caregiver misses the hunger and fullness cues of the baby, **the baby may be overfed** and become an overweight child. “Eating more” is not equal to being “healthier.”
- When other people feed the baby, **the mother needs to grasp opportunities to have time to bond with her baby.**
- Feeding babies with formula milk **increases household spending**, including the purchase of formula milk powder, bottles, dummies, sterilising equipment and so on. Also, there are the additional medical expenses, as the baby is more prone to illnesses.
- There is a **possibility** the brand of formula milk your baby is used to **runs out of stock**, creating unnecessary worries for the parents.



Directly breastfeeding the baby is the most natural way. After careful consideration, if you still decide to bottle-feed (either expressed breastmilk or formula milk), you must learn as much as you can about how to do it as safely as possible. You can ask healthcare professionals for the following information, or visit the website of the Family Health Service of the Department of Health:



Guide to Bottle Feeding (booklet)  
<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/6tt2k>

Healthy eating for infants and young children-Milk Feeding  
(leaflet) <http://s.fhs.gov.hk/0864y>





**Website : [www.fhs.gov.hk](http://www.fhs.gov.hk)**

**24-hour information hotline : 2112 9900**

**Breastfeeding Hotline : 3618 7450**