

Supporting Breastfeeding: Grandparents can make a difference



Health
Central Coast
Local Health District



Congratulations on becoming a grandparent!

Breastfeeding is important for the normal growth and development of babies. Encouragement and support can help make breastfeeding a positive experience for the whole family. Grandparents are an important part of this encouragement and support. As a grandparent, you want what is best for your grandchild.

Mothers in the 1960s–1980s may not have breastfed their babies because of a lack of support and/or understanding about breastfeeding.

This leaflet aims to provide information on breastfeeding that will help you feel more confident in supporting your daughter/daughter-in-law to breastfeed your grandchild.

Breastmilk for Baby

- ✓ Meets all the nutritional needs in the first 6 months and continues to be the most important food in the diet for the first 12 months
- ✓ Increases baby's resistance to infection
- ✓ Promotes normal growth and development e.g. immune system, eyesight, brain, speech, jaw and mouth
- ✓ Decreases the risk of SIDS, diabetes, respiratory disease, gastro, middle ear infections and obesity
- ✓ Breastmilk remains nutritious for as long as baby continues to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding for Mum

- ✓ Helps with bonding
- ✓ Helps mum's body return to its pre-pregnant state faster
- ✓ Reduces risk of breast cancer, diabetes, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.

What can grandparents do to help?

It can be difficult to know what to do, what to say and how to help your daughter/daughter-in-law establish breastfeeding. New mothers are keen to seek approval but may find it difficult to ask for help. Some new mothers feel that asking for help is showing that they are not coping. Ways in which you can help and support your daughter/daughter-in-law include:

- Being positive and encouraging
- Listening to her
- Encouraging her to eat and drink regularly
- Preparing healthy meals and snacks
- Encouraging rest
- Offering to help with housework
- Offering baby minding if that is what she would like
- Sharing positive experiences of breastfeeding
- Knowing where to get breastfeeding information when she is unsure (see page 11).

Breastfeeding is a learned skill. If mum and baby are having difficulties with breastfeeding, reassure her that there is help available from a midwife, lactation consultant, child and family health nurse, Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor or breastfeeding support group. You will find these numbers at the end of this booklet.

Breastfeeding facts

The best way to help with breastfeeding is to learn about it. We now know a lot more about the importance of breastmilk. There have been many studies showing the health benefits of breastmilk over the years. However, there is still inaccurate information in the community. To help you separate fact from fiction:

BREASTMILK & FORMULA (ARTIFICIAL BREASTMILK SUBSTITUTES) ARE NOT THE SAME

Breastmilk has exactly the right amount of nutrients needed to ensure babies grow well. There is more than enough water in breastmilk to quench baby's thirst even in hot weather. Breastmilk contains living cells and other unique factors that cannot be reproduced artificially. It is therefore impossible to produce a formula equal to breastmilk.

GIVING FORMULA HAS NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON BOTH MOTHER & BABY

Giving bottles of formula while establishing breastfeeding:

- may undermine a mother's self confidence about her ability to breastfeed
- may decrease mum's milk supply
- may confuse a young baby, as the action of sucking on an artificial teat is very different to sucking at the breast
- sucking on the breast helps develop a healthy jaw and prevent major dental work later in life
- may lead to blocked ducts and mastitis as the breast isn't being emptied as frequently.

Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly!



BREASTFED BABIES FEED OFTEN!

Young babies may feed 8-12 times in a 24 hr period because breastmilk is quickly & easily digested. Babies need to be fed when they show signs of hunger e.g. finger sucking. This helps to regulate the supply of breastmilk.

“How often do we go for four hours without a small snack, or a cuppa, and yet some people expect a tiny baby to last that long?”

DON'T WORRY IF BREASTMILK LOOKS "THIN AND WATERY"!

Breastmilk changes in composition during each feed; as well as throughout the day and from month to month. Expressed breastmilk in the fridge will normally separate into layers. It is ok to keep and use it for up to four days.

Your grandchild is getting enough breastmilk if they show these signs:

- ✓ Is alert, bright eyed and with good skin tone
- ✓ Has at least five heavy disposable nappies in 24 hours
- ✓ Gains some weight on a regular basis

Bowel motions of a fully breast fed baby range in colour from yellow to brown and have a distinctive but non offensive smell. The texture may vary from watery to pastelike. The introduction of other fluids/food changes the consistency and smell.

New babies often have frequent bowel motions. This will change as baby gets older. Fully breastfed babies do not get constipated, even if they do go a few days without passing a motion.

Encourage your daughter/daughter-in-law to contact her local early childhood health clinic or doctor if there are any changes that worry her.

IT'S OK FOR MUM TO BREASTFEED WHEREVER SHE FEELS COMFORTABLE!

It takes a lot of confidence for new mothers to breastfeed in public. Some mums may prefer to breastfeed in private. As a grandparent, wherever your daughter or daughter-in-law chooses to feed, your support is vital. If she wants to:

- ✓ Encourage her to feed in the company of families and friends
- ✓ Support her breastfeeding in public places

Dummies given to babies less than four weeks old can create problems with breastfeeding because dummies use a different sucking style. This may mean baby does not suck as well when being fed and the breasts are not stimulated enough to continue a good supply of milk and may increase the risk of mastitis.



Understanding breastfeeding issues

MILK SUPPLY

The more a baby feeds, the more milk mum will make!

Sometimes mothers feel that they don't have enough milk or that their milk is not good enough. Be reassured that breastmilk is made to suit the normal growth and development of each baby. When breastfeeding to baby's hunger cues, the mother's supply will match the baby's needs.

SORE NIPPLES

It is normal for mum's nipples to be sensitive in the first few days of breastfeeding and this will improve with time. Severe nipple pain is not normal. Pain can be caused by the baby being poorly attached to the breast or by infection. Pain during breastfeeding can be overcome so that breastfeeding is comfortable. (see page 11)

MASTITIS

Is caused by a blocked milk duct or a bacterial infection. Seek medical assistance immediately if a mother has a fever, feeling unwell and has a red, swollen and sore breast.

Continuing to breastfeed is the most important part of the treatment for mastitis.

Seek breastfeeding help from a lactation consultant, midwife, child & family health nurse or Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor.

NIGHT FEEDING

Previously, new parents were encouraged to get their babies into a four-hourly routine and frequent night time feeding was discouraged. However, we now know that night time feeding is important in:

- ✓ Establishing and maintaining milk supply
- ✓ Reducing or preventing engorgement
- ✓ Satisfying baby's nutritional needs

The age at which babies sleep through the night varies and is unrelated to how the baby is fed.

Lastly, what about introducing solids?

The age that babies began solid food has changed many times over the years. It is recommended that around six months is the right age to introduce solids because the digestive system of a young baby is not developed enough to cope with food before then. Early introduction of solids may contribute to the development of food allergies and may cause significant health problems.

International health authorities recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six months as the optimal way of feeding infants. Thereafter infants should receive complimentary foods with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond (World Health Organisation)¹.

Becoming a grandparent is very special. Your support and encouragement will make all the difference!



¹ Global Strategy for Infant and young children feeding (WHO 2003)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sydney Area

Early Childhood Health Centres for Breastfeeding Support

Consult your local White/Yellow Pages or **www.whitepages.com.au** under the heading 'Community Health Centre' or 'Early Childhood Health Centre'

Central Coast

Early Childhood Health Centres for Breastfeeding Support

4328 7900

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Breastfeeding Helpline: **1800 686 268**

www.breastfeeding.asn.au





This leaflet has been developed by NSCCAHS maternity services, child and family health, nutrition department and the health promotion unit in partnership with the Australian Breastfeeding Association and families of the Central Coast.