

# Ways to Give Extra Milk to Your Breastfed Baby



Tips for giving extra milk while supporting breastfeeding

## When to feed...

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There are a very few times when some babies need extra milk (supplements) even when they are breastfed.

Examples:

- A mother is very sick.
- A mother and baby are separated, such as when either mom or baby has to stay in hospital.
- A baby has certain medical conditions.
- A baby is not back to birth weight by two weeks or is not gaining enough weight with increased breastfeeding.
- A mother has a low milk supply.  
The baby might need extra milk while mother's milk supply is building up.
- A baby is born early (premature).

If any of these applied to you or your baby, we might have told you to wake your baby up regularly to feed. Once your baby is well and growing, you no longer need to do this. Instead, your baby will tell you when they are hungry and when they are full (see page 13).

Talk with your doctor or nurse if you are concerned about your baby's feeds.

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In this booklet:

- We refer to the person breastfeeding as the parent.
- We use the word 'breastfeeding'. You might prefer a different word such as 'nursing' or 'chestfeeding'. Let your family, friends, and care providers know what word you prefer.
- When we say 'healthcare provider', this could be your family doctor, midwife, nurse practitioner, or lactation consultant.

## What to feed...

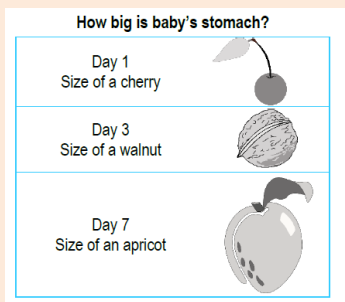
### 1<sup>st</sup> Choice - Your own expressed breast milk

You can express milk by hand or use a breast pump.

**Myth:** Babies feed often because they are not getting enough breastmilk and need extra milk.

**Fact:** This is a baby's way of getting your body to make more milk.

Also, baby's stomach starts out very small and can only take a little milk at a time.



### 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice - Pasteurized donor human milk

You need a prescription from your doctor or midwife to get extra milk from the Provincial Milk Bank. We give this kind of milk to sick babies in the hospital first, and it is sometimes available for purchase.

For more information:



Provincial Milk Bank

[bcwomensmilkbank.ca](http://bcwomensmilkbank.ca) - look under **Receiving Milk**



Call 604-875-3743

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Choice - Store-bought formula (artificial infant milk)

## How to give extra milk...

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- **Look for early signs of hunger** like rooting or sucking on fingers. Let your baby tell you when they are hungry.
- **Breastfeed first** if you can. You can also give some extra milk first and then let baby try at the breast.
- **Express or pump your milk each time** you give your baby extra milk. This helps you make more milk and protects your milk supply for baby.
- **Hold your baby close** to your breast and skin-to-skin whenever possible. This promotes bonding, helps your baby's brain develop well, and helps you make more milk.
- **Keep baby's head higher than their body while feeding.** When you hold your baby close and upright, you lessen the chances of your baby getting ear infections.

## Ways to give extra milk

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If your baby is still hungry after the breastfeeding, use one of the ways described here to give extra milk.

First, consider ways of feeding that do not involve a bottle. Some people notice their babies will not go back to the breast as easily after bottles.

These ways to give extra milk are less likely to interfere with breastfeeding:

- cup feeding
- spoon feeding
- dropper or syringe feeding
- finger feeding
- tube feeding at the breast
- baby-led bottle feeding (responsive bottle feeding)

## Cup Feeding

**When:** Your baby is awake but not able to suck well at the breast.

You are separated from your baby.

Your baby needs any amount of extra milk (colostrum or breast milk) from a few drops to larger amounts.

### Did you know?

Studies show that cup feeding is the best way to give increasing amounts of extra milk and support future breastfeeding.

**Remember:** Cup feeding can take time to learn. Ask for help if you need it.

**How:**

- Wash your hands.
- Hold baby upright either skin-to-skin or swaddled to keep arms from spilling the milk.
- You may want to put a bib under the chin to soak up any spills.
- Fill a small half full (medicine cup or shot glass).
- Rest the cup on baby's bottom lip, tipping it so the milk touches baby's lip.
- Let baby lick at or sip at the milk at their own pace. (Do not pour the milk).
- Take the cup away when the baby stops. Baby will stop when they have had enough.

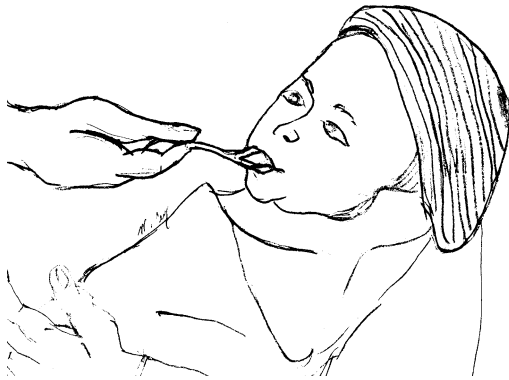


## Spoon Feeding

**When:** Your newborn baby only needs small amounts of extra milk. It is good for giving your first milk, called colostrum (say *kol-os-trum*).

**How:**

- Wash your hands.
- Hold your baby close and upright either skin-to-skin or swaddled to keep arms from spilling the milk.
- Hand express directly into the spoon.  
You might find it easier to have someone help you by either holding your baby or the spoon.
- Bring the spoon to baby's mouth.
- Gently tip a few drops into baby's mouth.
- Wait for baby to swallow and repeat.



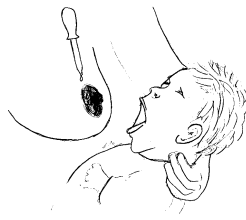
## Dropper or Syringe Feeding

**When:** Your newborn baby only needs small amounts of extra milk. It is good for giving your first milk, called colostrum (say *kol-os-trum*).

**How:**

*Option 1* - To encourage rooting and latching.

- Wash your hands.
- Hold your baby close at the breast.
- Put 1 or 2 drops on your nipple or baby's lips.
- Aim your nipple to the roof of baby's mouth as they open their mouth to latch.



*Option 2* - To keep your baby sucking at the breast when already latched but needs extra milk or has a weak suck.

- Wash your hands.
- Put the dropper or syringe in the corner of the baby's mouth while latched.
- Squeeze a little bit of milk into their mouth to keep them sucking.



*Option 3* - To put extra milk directly into baby's mouth when away from the breast.

- Wash your hands.
- Hold your baby close and upright.
- Put a few drops inside lower lip or between your baby's cheek and gums.
- Wait for baby to swallow and repeat.



## Finger Feeding

**When:** Your baby gets to practice sucking while getting extra milk.

Your baby is not latching or too tired to latch and you need to give extra milk.

**How:**

*Option 1* - Using a tube at the finger

(called a supplemental nursing system - see page 8)

- Wash your hands.
- Fill a bottle or syringe with the milk.
- Attach tubing to the bottle or syringe.
- Tape other end of the tubing to your finger with the tape about 2.5 cm (1 inch) from your fingertip. You don't want the tape touching or in baby's mouth.
- Hold your baby upright.
- Touch baby's lips with your finger, fingernail side on the tongue, until baby opens their mouth.
- Let your baby suck on your finger.
- Let your finger to go in baby's mouth far enough to allow sucking but not gagging. If baby starts gagging, pull your finger out slightly.





### *Option 2 – Using just your finger*

- Wash your hands.
- Fill a dropper or syringe with milk.
- Hold your baby upright.
- Put 1 to 2 drops of milk onto your finger.
- Touch baby's lips with your finger, fingernail side on the tongue, until baby opens their mouth.
- Let your baby suck on your finger.
- Let your finger to go in baby's mouth far enough to allow sucking but not gagging. If baby starts gagging, pull your finger out slightly.

### **Tube feeding at the breast**

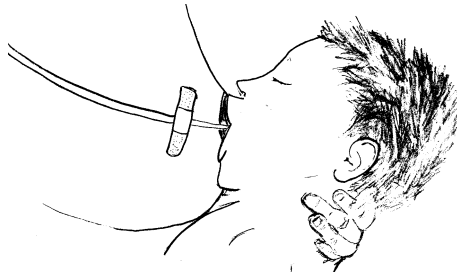
Also called Supplemental Nursing System (SNS), lactation aid, or tube at the breast

When: Your baby latches well but needs extra milk.

Your baby needs extra milk in larger amounts.

You want increase your milk supply while giving extra milk.

You want your baby to practice feeding at the breast while giving extra milk.



While in the hospital, we use tubing attached to a syringe.

At home, use a Supplemental Nursing System.

You can get this at your local pharmacy. If the cost of the system is a concern for you, talk to us about other ways to set up tube feeding at the breast.

**Remember:** This skill can take time to learn.  
Ask your nurse or doctor for help if needed.

How:

*Option 1 - Using a store-bought system*

- Wash your hands.
- Set up the system following the steps that came with the system.
- Tape the tube on the breast (not the nipple).  
Make sure the tape is away from baby's mouth.
- Let the milk flow by gravity until you have a drop of milk at the end of the tube.
- Stop the flow by pinching off the tubing.
- Position your baby close and upright.
- Latch baby as usual.
- Release the tubing to let the milk flow.
- Raise or lower the bottle to control how the milk flows.



### *Option 2 - Using a syringe attached to tubing*

- Wash your hands.
- Fill the syringe with milk and attach the tubing.
- Fill the tubing by pressing lightly on the plunger until you have a drop of milk at the end of the tube.
- Position your baby close and upright.
- Latch baby as usual.
- Gently slide the tube into the corner of baby's mouth, and over the gums. (If you want, you can tape the tubing to your breast to help keep it in place.)
- Use light pressure on the plunger to keep the milk flowing.

## **Baby-led bottle-feeding**

We call this Responsive Bottle Feeding

When: You are not able to breastfeed.

You are weaning your baby off the breast.

You choose to use bottle to give extra milk.

### **Did you know?**

Bottle-feeding can make it harder your baby to go to the breast and can refuse to breastfeed. This is because the way babies drink from a bottle is very different from the normal action of breastfeeding.

If your goal is to breastfeed your baby, it is best to use one of the other ways of giving extra milk described in this booklet.

If you choose to give extra milk with bottle-feeding, do it only for a short time, and continue to try breastfeeding before giving extra milk.

## How:

- Use a soft, round, slow-flow nipple.
- Choose straight bottles instead of bent or curved bottles.
- Wash your hands.
- Prepare the bottle with just enough milk for your baby's age and size of stomach (see page 2).
- Hold your baby close and in an upright position.
- Brush nipple tip onto baby's lips.
- Wait for a wide-open mouth.
- Place the nipple on the tongue and let the baby suck the nipple deep into their mouth so the lips are on the wide base of the nipple (like latching onto the breast).
- Start with the bottle tipped down and let the baby suck on the empty nipple for a few sucks (like waiting for mother's milk to let down).
- Now tilt the bottle up slightly.
- To slow the flow of milk, let the milk just cover the nipple tip. Some air in the nipple won't bother your baby.

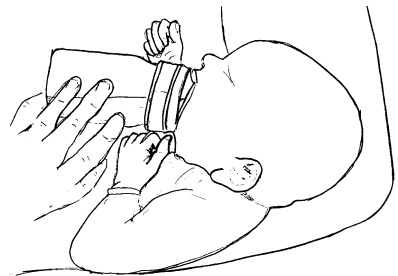
The flow of milk through firm, flattened tip, or fast-flow nipples are less like breastfeeding.

A bent or curved bottle tends to allow a faster flow of milk and can make it much harder for a baby to go to the breast.



**Remember:** Let your baby decide when the feed starts. This allows them to practice their rooting reflex.

Don't force-feed or 'screw' the nipple into their mouth.



- **Respond to your baby's feeding pattern.**
  - Copy the patterns of breastfeeding by watching for when your baby's sucks and pauses.
  - Tilt the bottle down when they pause, leaving the nipple in their mouth, so they can take a rest.
  - Wait until baby sucks a few times before tipping the bottle back up.
  - Take as long to feed as it would if you were breastfeeding (about 10 to 20 minutes).
  - Burp your baby about halfway through the feed.
  - Watch your baby to see when they are finished eating. Don't force your baby to finish the bottle.
  - Burp your baby again at the end of the feed.
- Switch between sides halfway through the feed or alternate sides with each feed – this can help your baby develop both sides of their brain.
- Make sure you spend time with your baby safely skin-to-skin.
- Always teach others to give your baby a bottle in the same way.

If you leave the bottle dripping into the baby's mouth when they are full, it can cause your baby to choke or be over-fed. It could also cause tooth decay and ear infections in the future.

## Why let your baby control their feeding?

When you respond to your baby's feeding pattern, your baby will be less likely to overeat now and in the future.

The slow pace of feeding is a way to help your baby learn when they are full without being over-fed. When we overfeed babies or feed them too quickly, it stops the message to the brain that the stomach is full.

We know that when we overfeed babies, they are more likely to overeat as an adult, be overweight, and have medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

Whether you return to breastfeeding or choose to continue bottle-feeding, always let your baby be in control when to feed, how much to feed, and when to stop feeding. This is key to helping your baby have healthy eating habits for life.

### Signs of hunger

- Licking lips
- Sucking on the tongue
- Sucking hands
- Suck on your knuckles or fingers
- Turns with open mouth searching for the breast
- Start to fuss

### Signs of being full

- Sucking and swallowing slows or stops
- Mouth closes
- Baby pushes or turns away from the bottle
- Baby is relaxed with arms and hands open
- Baby falls asleep

## Helpful Resources

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We give you different ways to get to these resources:

- the website
- a shortened web address
- the name of the resource
- a QR code

### Fraser Health

[fraserhealth.ca](https://fraserhealth.ca)

- [Breastfeeding](#)

[fraserhealth.ca](https://fraserhealth.ca) and search  
or [tinyurl.com/y6nwkzac](https://tinyurl.com/y6nwkzac)



### Fraser Health Patient Education

[patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca](https://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca)

- [Expressing your Breast Milk: When your baby is in the hospital](#)



- [Breastfeeding Your Newborn](#)



- [Increasing Milk Supply for Breastfeeding Mothers](#)



- [Bottle Feeding Your Baby - Birth to 6 Months](#)



- [Feeding Baby When Supplementing is Needed](#)



### HealthLinkBC

[healthlinkbc.ca](https://healthlinkbc.ca)

- [Breastfeeding – Health File Number 70](#)

[healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/breastfeeding](https://healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/breastfeeding)  
or [tinyurl.com/y5n2mjyh](https://tinyurl.com/y5n2mjyh)



- [Feeding Your Baby Formula: Before You Start - Health File Number 69a](#)

[healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/formula-before-you-start](https://healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/formula-before-you-start)  
or [tinyurl.com/y37vzn6o](https://tinyurl.com/y37vzn6o)



- [Feeding Your Baby Formula: Safely Making and Storing Formula - Health File Number 69b](#)

[healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/making-storing-formula](https://healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/making-storing-formula)  
or [tinyurl.com/y5agaqpk](https://tinyurl.com/y5agaqpk)



## Video resources

### Healthy Families BC

[healthyfamiliesbc.ca](http://healthyfamiliesbc.ca)

- [Videos on Breastfeeding](#)

[healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/videos-breastfeeding](http://healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/videos-breastfeeding)  
or [tinyurl.com/y4x6y9o4](http://tinyurl.com/y4x6y9o4)



- [Video on Alternative Feeding Methods for Newborns](#)

On the *Videos on Breastfeeding* page, select this title

[healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-alternative-feeding-methods-newborns](http://healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-alternative-feeding-methods-newborns) or [tinyurl.com/y6ekc5k3](http://tinyurl.com/y6ekc5k3)



### International Breastfeeding Centre

[ibconline.ca](http://ibconline.ca)

- [Breastfeeding videos](#)

[ibconline.ca/breastfeeding-videos-2](http://ibconline.ca/breastfeeding-videos-2)



### Other videos

- [Video on Spoon and Cup Feeding](#)

[peelregion.ca/parenting/feeding-baby/expressing-breastmilk.asp](http://peelregion.ca/parenting/feeding-baby/expressing-breastmilk.asp)  
or [tinyurl.com/yby6fvum](http://tinyurl.com/yby6fvum)



A QR code (short for 'quick response' code) is a type of barcode that you scan with your smart device's camera. Once scanned, it takes you to that web page.

### Public Health Units

Abbotsford	604-864-3400	Mission	604-814-5500
Agassiz	604-793-7160	New Westminster	604-777-6740
Burnaby	604-918-7605	Surrey – Cloverdale	604-575-5100
Chilliwack	604-702-4900	Surrey - Guildford	604-587-4750
Delta - North	604-507-5400	Surrey - Newton	604-529-2000
Delta - South	604-952-3550	Surrey - North	604-587-7900
Hope	604-860-7630	TriCities	604-949-7200
Langley	604-539-2900	White Rock South Surrey	604-542-4000
Maple Ridge	604-476-7000		

[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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To order: [patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca](mailto:patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca)