



How Breastfeeding Works

The more breastmilk your baby drinks, the more milk your breasts will make. When your baby sucks at the breast, hormones are released. These hormones make the milk and cause the milk to '**let down**' or flow.

The first milk you produce is called colostrum and it looks thick and yellowish. Some people think this first milk isn't good for your baby, but it's very important. It contains substances both to feed and help protect your baby from getting sick. This milk slowly becomes thinner and more watery looking, but it has everything your baby needs to grow and feel full.

You can tell if your milk is flowing properly in a number of ways:

- A change in your baby's sucking rate from quick little sucks to sucking and swallowing rhythmically, at about one suck each second.
- Some mothers get a tingling or a 'pins and needles' feeling within the breast.
- Sometimes there is a sudden feeling of fullness in the breast, and your other breast may start to leak milk.
- You may become thirsty.

Emotions like anxiety, embarrassment, tension or extreme tiredness sometimes affect milk flow. Being relaxed helps your milk to flow more readily.

- Make yourself comfortable. Have a drink and healthy snack near you.
- Express a few drops of milk before putting your baby to the breast.
- Gently massage your breast as your baby feeds.
- Check that your baby is well positioned at the breast

How can I tell that my baby is getting enough milk?

Your breastfed baby is getting enough milk if:

- He is feeding whenever he wants and not to a schedule. This will be at least 6-8 feeds in 24 hours. Some babies have 10-12 or more feeds.
- In 24 hours there should be at least 6-8 pale wet cloth nappies or 3-5 heavily wet disposable nappies. In 24 hours a very young baby will have 2 or more soft bowel motions.
- Your baby seems reasonably alert, active and happy.

Over a period of weeks, your baby will gradually gain weight. Your baby's head will grow and your baby will grow in length.

Further Reading

- Fact Sheet *Putting Your Baby to the Breast*

For more information contact your Child Health Centre or the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA).

Breastfeeding Helpline
1800 mum 2 mum

1800 686 268

The ABA Breastfeeding Helpline is available 7 days a week and is staffed by trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Email counselling and more information is available at www.breastfeeding.asn.au