



Does your new baby need more than mothers milk?

Mothers milk with nothing added can meet the needs of most babies for the first six months. Giving formula, other fluids or foods if the baby does not need them may cause problems. Get more information so you can make an informed decision.

Sometimes parents think their baby is not able to breastfeed or needs more than just mothers milk. Or a baby may need a supplement for a medical reason. If this is the case, ask your doctor, midwife, nurse or dietitian to explain the reason to you.

A baby who is very small or weak may not be able to feed at the breast yet. These babies can be fed expressed mothers milk by tube, cup, or spoon. Mothers milk is best to protect these little babies from illness. Hind milk has a high fat content to help the baby grow.

A very few babies have conditions that mean their body cannot process a sugar or a protein in milk. These babies may need part or complete feeding with a special breastmilk substitute specific to their condition and regular follow-up by a specialist team.

In most cases a mother taking medications or with an illness can breastfeed. In a few cases a medication is changed to one that is more suitable with breastfeeding.

Most mothers can produce enough milk for their baby. Some babies and mothers may need a bit of help to learn to breastfeed, so ask for help if you have any worry about your milk.



What milk to choose for your baby?

1. The first choice for a baby is his/her own mothers milk at the breast.
2. The second best choice is own mothers milk expressed and given by cup, tube or bottle.
3. Next comes mothers milk from another mother. If your baby is ill, there is a donor milk bank with milk from tested women, like a blood bank.
4. If no human milk is available, then a baby will need milk from an other animal. This milk is processed to be used for a human baby. The brands of infant formula are similar to each other. They must be made to the same minimum standard.



Further reading

BFHI Link comes out 3-4 times a year and has information for health workers and a handout for parents. They can be downloaded from www.ioph.ie/babyfriendlyinitiative if your maternity unit does not have copies available. Some topics are:

BFHI Link Issue 6, November 2000 talked about supplement use and included a handout *Just One Bottle*, which outlined the risks of using supplements.

BFHI Link Issue 16, August 2003 looked at breastfeeding if the mother has a disability.

BFHI Link Issue 20, September 2004 was about breastfeeding when the mother is ill including medication use, hospitalisation and general care.