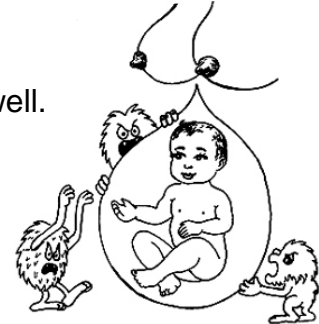


Mother's milk is important for a premature baby

Mother's milk is important for all babies.

It is even more important when a baby is born early or with a low birth weight.

- Mother's milk protects the baby from infections.
- Mother's milk helps the baby's gut and brain to develop well.
- The mother has a close link with her baby when she provides her milk.
- Even a few days of milk makes a difference to the baby's health.



Before your baby is born:

If you know that your baby is expected to be in the special care or neonatal unit, visit the unit and find out how they support you to breastfeed or to express milk.

Talk with your doctor, midwife, lactation consultant or neonatal nurse about giving your baby mother's milk.

When your baby is born it may help to:

Put your baby to your breast as soon as your baby is stable. This helps you both.

If your baby cannot suck, try to start hand expressing your milk within the first 6 hours of birth. Aim to express at least 6-8 times a day. This first milk paints your baby's gut and helps to protect it.

When milk production increases, an electric pump can be used in conjunction with hand expression. Make sure the neonatal unit knows that you are bringing milk for your baby.

If you are unwell, or only decide to give your milk to your baby after a few days, you can still start to express at that time.

Your baby may be able to suck at your breast or may be fed by tube or cup.



Have patience. At first your baby may only nuzzle the breast, then take a few sucks when stronger. Gradually baby will be able to take more feeds at the breast and less from the tube.



Have your baby on your chest in skin-to-skin contact for as many hours as you can each day. Your heart beat calms baby, and baby stays warm.

If you are not breastfeeding, ask about using milk from the milk bank. Mothers donate their milk and this is tested and pasteurised before use. It is like using blood from a blood bank.

Prepare for discharge so you feel that you can cope at home, and so baby is breastfeeding well. Find out what support is available after discharge.

You are important too. Take care of yourself.

