

Infant feeding: What are my options?

Breastfeeding is the normal way to provide infants with the nutrition they need for healthy growth and development. Health Canada recommends babies be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond.^{1 & 4}

It is your right to make an informed decision about how you feed your baby, and it is important for you to have all the information before you choose what is best for you and your baby.

There are unique situations in which families choose to not breastfeed, or are unable to breastfeed. Many people do not know that there are risks when using a breastmilk substitute like formula. Talk to your health care provider about what options are best for you and your baby. The Middlesex-London Health Unit supports all families regardless of how they decide to feed their infant.

Babies who are fed infant formula are at a higher risk for:

- Ear, lung and urinary tract infections,
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS),
- Diarrhea,
- Less protection from asthma and allergies,
- Diabetes,
- Some childhood cancers,
- Becoming overweight, and
- Lower scores on developmental screening tests.³

Women who do not breastfeed are at a higher risk for:

- Increased bleeding in the days following childbirth,
- Delayed return to pre-pregnancy weight,
- Type 2 diabetes,
- Breast and ovarian cancer,
- Heart disease, and
- Osteoporosis (brittle bones).³

Did you know?

The World Health Organization states the following:

- Breastmilk substitutes (formula) ...
 - Are a processed food with added artificial ingredients;
 - Can be harmful to baby's health if prepared or stored incorrectly;
 - Do not change to meet baby's growing needs, and
 - Cost more money than breastfeeding.²
- Formula companies make misleading claims about the health benefits through their advertising and marketing.²

Mothers who want to breastfeed usually find that they have trouble establishing and maintaining their milk supply if they give their infant formula.

Once you stop breastfeeding, your milk supply will naturally decrease making it difficult to go back to breastfeeding.

For more information and support:

- Contact your health care provider
- Visit an Infant Growth/ Development & Breastfeeding Drop-in
- Call Health Connection 519-663-5317 ext. 2280
- Visit <http://www.healthunit.com/babies>

References:

1. Health Canada, Canadian Pediatric Society, Dietitians of Canada, and Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. (2012). *Joint Statement on Infant Feeding*. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/infant-nourisson/recom/index-eng.php>
2. IBFAN Malaysia. (2010). *Protecting infant health: A health worker's guide to the International Code of Breastmilk Substitutes (11th ed.)*. Malaysia: IBFAN.
3. Spatz, D., and Lessen, R. (2011). *Risks of not breastfeeding*, Morrisville, NC: International Lactation Consultant Association.
4. World Health Organization. (2013). *Health topics: Breastfeeding*. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/>

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How Should I Feed My Baby?

Making an Informed Decision

