

Exclusive Breastfeeding: Isn't Some Breastfeeding Good Enough?

What is it?

Exclusive breastfeeding means your baby receives only your breast milk and nothing else to eat or drink. The Canadian Paediatric Society and Health Canada recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life.

Why do experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding?

For babies:

- Your breast milk is made to be your baby's only food.
- It changes as your baby grows. Formula stays the same.
- It contains antibodies and other immune factors that help your baby fight germs. Formula does not contain any of these.
- Breast milk coats the inside of your baby's stomach, intestines and bowels (gut) and prevents germs from getting into the baby's body.
- Babies who are exclusively breastfed stay healthier than babies who are given both formula and breast milk.

For mothers:

- More calories are used in making breast milk so the mother loses weight more quickly.
- Mothers who exclusively breastfeed often go longer without a menstrual period after their babies are born; for this reason exclusive breastfeeding also provides some natural form of birth control.
- Exclusive breastfeeding gives greater protection for mothers against breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.

Why do some mothers think they don't have enough breast milk?

Frequent feeding

- Newborn babies have small stomachs. They fill up quickly and empty quickly. Newborn babies feed often, sometimes every one to two hours. Babies need to feed at least eight times in 24 hours.
- Babies have growth spurts. During a growth spurt your baby will want to breastfeed more often than usual and may be very fussy.

Breasts don't feel as full

- When your baby is born your breasts will make more breast milk than the baby needs. As your baby gets older your breasts will match the amount of milk your baby is taking. You still have enough breast milk for your baby, but your breasts don't feel as full.

Shorter breastfeeds

- As babies get older and better at breastfeeding, they will feed more quickly.

You don't get much milk from pumping

- Your baby is much better at taking milk from your breasts than any pump or hand expression.

Crying and not sleeping

- Babies cry and awaken for many reasons. Crying and waking is not necessarily a sign of hunger.

If you don't think you have enough breast milk, talk to your health care provider or Peel Public Health before you decide to give a bottle of formula.

How can I be sure I have enough breast milk?

- What goes in has to come out. Your baby has lots of wet and soiled diapers (pees and poos).
- Your baby has alert calm periods during the day and wakes for feeds.
- Your baby has soft smooth skin that bounces back when pressed.

What if I have to leave my baby?

- You can express your breast milk using your hands or a breast pump.
- Peel Public Health can help you decide whether or not you need a pump and what kind might be best for you.
- Your baby's caregiver can offer your baby your breast milk instead of formula.

What if I have to give my baby formula?

If at all possible, try to avoid giving your baby formula for the first six weeks of life. When your baby gets something else besides your breast milk, your baby will need less breast milk from you, and that sends signals to your body to make less breast milk. Formula can also change the lining in your baby's gut and it does not provide any immune protection for your baby. So, if you absolutely have to give formula, go back to exclusive breastfeeding as soon as possible.

For more information, call Region of Peel—Public Health at 905-799-7700
Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Caledon residents call free of charge at 905-584-2216
www.BreastfeedingInPeel.ca

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Breastfeeding Friendly



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