

Breastfeeding turned out to be the most amazing experience for me and for my family. I was a bit uncertain at first, but I'm glad that I did it.

The best start

Breastfeeding gives your baby the healthiest possible start! It's the best food for your baby.

Breastmilk is the **only** food babies need until they're 6 months old. If your baby gets any other food or drink—including infant formula—you will

make less breastmilk. This means that your baby will get less breastmilk and will not get all the benefits that breastfeeding offers.

Breastfeeding has lots of benefits—for babies, mothers, families, and communities.

Breastfeeding benefits babies

- Human milk is the perfect food for human babies.
- It keeps them healthy by protecting them from ear infections, allergies, diarrhea, vomiting, and anemia (low iron).
- It helps their brain develop. Breastmilk contains exactly the right mix of the nutrients that babies need for their brain to develop.
- It lowers the risk that babies will develop childhood leukemia, type 1 and 2 diabetes, respiratory infections, and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- Babies are less likely to come into contact with germs because breastmilk is always clean.
- Babies can be fed right away when they're hungry, because breastmilk is always ready.
- Babies are less likely to be burned, because breastmilk is always the right temperature.



Added info...

Breastfed babies need Vitamin D drops.

Contact your local Public Health Services office for more information about this (contact information, page 102).

Breastfeeding benefits mothers

- Breastfeeding helps your uterus return to its pre-pregnancy size more quickly.
- It uses up the fat your body stored during pregnancy.
- It releases a hormone that makes you feel good!
- It makes it less likely that you will develop breast cancer, ovarian cancer, or osteoporosis.
- Breastmilk is ready and waiting all the time. You do not have to purchase, measure, and mix formula. You don't have to warm bottles during the night. You can meet your baby's need right away.



Breastfeeding benefits families and communities

- Breastfeeding saves money. You don't need to buy formula, bottles, and equipment. Breastmilk requires no preparation. There's no need to use electricity and hot water.
- Breastfeeding protects the environment. Breastmilk doesn't need packaging. Producing it doesn't harm the environment.
- Breastfeeding reduces health care costs. Breastfed babies are sick less. They need fewer visits to health care providers and hospitals.
- Breastfeeding reduces the number of sick days that families must use to care for their sick children.

Added info...

You and your baby will both be healthier if you don't smoke or use alcohol or other drugs while you are breastfeeding.

However, even if you smoke, breastfeeding is still the best way to feed your baby.

You can find more information in **Breastfeeding Basics**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 102](#)).

You'll find more information on smoking in the "All Parents" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Connecting with your baby

Feeding your baby is a special time. It's a time to cuddle, enjoy, and connect with your baby.

When you breastfeed your baby:

- Hold him close. Babies love to be held skin-to-skin. Babies latch on and breastfeed better when they're often snuggled skin-to-skin.
- Look into his eyes.
- Smile, talk, and sing to him.

Other family members can share in breastfeeding, too.

Feeding times are a good time for brothers and sisters to connect with their new baby. They can sit with you and have a snack. They can talk or sing to the baby. You can tell everyone a story.

Support from fathers and partners helps mothers to breastfeed happily and successfully. By bringing the baby to Mom for breastfeeding, or by bringing Mom food, drinks, and pillows, fathers and partners can connect with both Mom and baby. Their encouragement, praise, and pride in giving their baby the best start in life can get mothers through times when they are tired and wonder if breastfeeding is worth it.

When you feed your baby, you do more than nourish his body. You are making connections that will last a lifetime.

Added info...

There are many ways that fathers and partners can connect with their baby.

- Skin-to-skin cuddling after breastfeeding
- Holding, rocking, cuddling, massaging, and playing
- Changing, burping, and bathing

There are many ways to build a loving connection with your baby!



Your baby wants you to know...

Hold me close when you feed me. Look into my eyes and tell me you love me.

Breastfeeding to comfort your baby

Breastfeeding does more than make your baby's body strong. Your breast gives your baby comfort as well as food. You can breastfeed your baby when she's lonely, tired, or scared—not just when she's hungry.

Being held close to breastfeed helps a baby feel safe and loved. You aren't spoiling your baby by breastfeeding her when she needs comfort and closeness.

Added info...

To get your baby off to a good start with breastfeeding, it's best not to use a soother until about 6 weeks. By this time, your baby will be breastfeeding well.



Your baby wants you to know...

When you breastfeed me, your love nourishes me too.

Babies need to feed often

Babies come in different weights and lengths, but all babies have very tiny tummies!

Babies' tummies can't hold much at one time, so they need to be fed often—day and night.

Every baby has his own way of breastfeeding. Most newborn babies need to feed every 1 to 3 hours. Some babies need to feed many times during the night. Others may not need to feed as often. Follow your baby's cues. You'll soon learn what's normal for him.

Added info...

Your baby has many ways to tell you he's hungry. Some feeding cues are:

- Holding hands or fists over his chest
- Sucking on his fingers or fist
- Turning toward your body with an open mouth
- Smacking his lips
- Sticking out his tongue
- Making sucking sounds
- Crying



A newborn baby's tummy is the size of a cherry.



By 3 or 4 days, a baby's tummy is the size of a walnut.



By 5 or 6 days, a baby's tummy is the size of an apricot.



By 1 to 3 weeks, a baby's tummy is the size of an egg.

How to tell if your baby is breastfeeding well

You know your baby is breastfeeding well when:

- **You can hear her swallowing while she's feeding.**
- **She's content after breastfeeding.**
- **She has wet or dirty diapers each day.**
As your baby's tummy gets bigger, she'll have more wet diapers. On the first day, she might have 1. Then, each day of the first week, she'll have a few more. After the first week, she should have between 6 and 10 wet or dirty diapers each day.
- **She's growing and gaining weight.**

Added info...

There may be a good reason why babies want to breastfeed during the night! Nighttime feedings increase your milk supply. You make more milk at night because that's when the hormones that help you make breastmilk are at their highest levels.



Your baby wants you to know...

Come when I call! *Crying is only one of the ways I can let you know I'm hungry. When you come as soon as I start to cry, you help me learn that I can trust you to come when I need you.*

When I cry, I need you to come quickly. If you wait too long, I worry that you won't come. I cry so hard you'll have to calm me down before I can breastfeed.

Weight gain and growth

It's normal for babies to lose a little weight in the first few days after they're born. By 2 to 3 weeks, most babies have gained that back and weigh the same as they did at birth.

From birth to 3 months, most babies gain about 675 to 900 grams (1 and a half to 2 pounds) per month.

From 4 to 6 months, most babies gain about 450 to 560 grams (1 to 1 and a quarter pounds) a month.

As well as gaining weight, your baby is also growing longer. You may notice her outgrowing her newborn size sleepers!

Remember that every baby grows at her own pace. Talk to your health care provider if you have any concerns about how your baby is growing.



Growth spurts

Babies have times when they grow very fast. For most babies, these growth spurts happen at around 10 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months.

Growth spurts usually last for only a few days.

During a growth spurt, babies usually want to breastfeed more often or for longer at each feeding. Follow your baby's cues. He'll let you know when he's hungry and how much he needs.

By feeding your baby whenever he's hungry, you will make enough milk to meet your baby's

needs. Your milk will give him the nourishment he needs to grow. At this age he does not need solid foods.

Added info...

Just because your baby reaches for the foods she sees you eating, it doesn't mean she's ready for solid food. Babies reach for just about everything they see—not just food.



Breastfeeding

When will my baby be ready for solid food? My mother says that she gave me cereal when I was just a couple of months old. She says it will help my baby sleep through the night. Is that true?

It's too soon for solid food

Parents often feel pressure to give their baby solid food. Babies shouldn't get solid food before 6 months.

When you give your baby solid food too soon, it fills her tummy. It makes her too full to drink much breastmilk. This means that you will make less and your baby will not get enough breastmilk to give her the nourishment she needs.

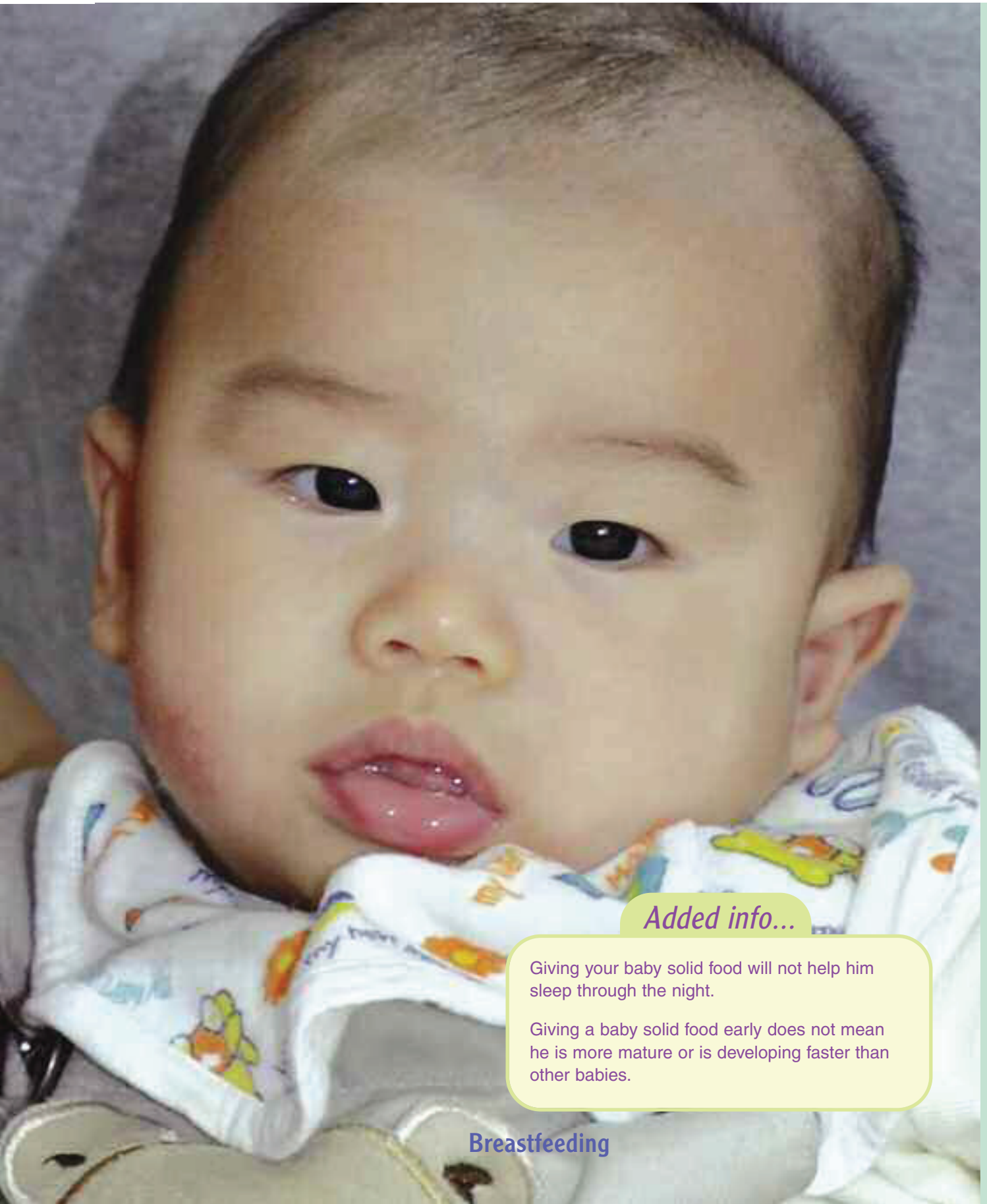
Six months may be later than the age you were when your parents first gave you solid foods. It may be different from what others tell you.

But there are good reasons to wait until 6 months.

- By 6 months, babies are able to begin learning how to swallow, chew, and pick up solid food.
- By 6 months, babies' bodies are ready for solid food.
- By 6 months, babies need foods that contain iron.

Until they're 6 months old, the nourishment babies get from breastmilk is more important to their growth and development than anything they could get from solid food.





Added info...

Giving your baby solid food will not help him sleep through the night.

Giving a baby solid food early does not mean he is more mature or is developing faster than other babies.

Breastfeeding anytime, anywhere

You have the right to breastfeed your baby anytime, anywhere. In Nova Scotia, both the law and government policy protect this right. No one can legally ask you to leave a public place because you're breastfeeding.

Other mothers are a good source of ideas for ways to breastfeed in public. Look for La Leche League meetings or breastfeeding support groups in your community. If you have friends who have breastfed their babies, talk to them.

You can also get information about how to continue breastfeeding when you return to work or school from your local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 102](#)).

Everyone has a part to play in making our communities welcoming to breastfeeding families.

Added info...

You will see moms and babies breastfeeding in many places in your community. There are many options for breastfeeding in public. Do whatever feels comfortable to you.

- You can wear clothes that lift up from the waist.
- You can drape a blanket or towel around you and your baby.
- You can use a cloth baby sling that will cover the baby while breastfeeding.
- You can turn your body away from other people while your baby latches on.

Look for breastfeeding rooms in malls, airports, and other public spaces.



*I have many questions about breastfeeding! Who can I talk to?
Who will listen?*

Support is important when you breastfeed

Every mother and baby learn to breastfeed together. For some, it comes easily. Others have more questions or concerns. Parents often enjoy sharing their stories, experiences, and feelings about breastfeeding with other parents.

Other mothers who are breastfeeding—or who have breastfed—are one of the best sources of support, information, and someone to talk with. You can meet other breastfeeding mothers in your community through:

- Family Resource Centres
- Classes and support groups offered by Public Health Services

- La Leche League Canada
(contact information, page 103)

You can get information about breastfeeding from:

- Health care providers and public health
- Books and videos from your local library
- Websites like:
www.infactcanada.ca
www.lalecheleaguecanada.ca
www.first6weeks.ca



Breastfeeding

Loving Care



Birth to 6 Months

2010


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