



Guidebook

Choosing how to feed my baby

This guide has 3 sections that will assist you in deciding which way is best for you to feed your baby.

Section 1. Information:

In this section you will find all of the necessary information on:

- Breastfeeding
- Benefits of exclusive breastfeeding
- Risks of not breastfeeding and commercial infant formula
- Possible alternatives

Section 2. Motivation :

This section will allow you to identify your preferences and needs in order to make an informed decision. You will find:

- An exercise on what is important to you and how you will be able to meet your goals
- An exercise to help you evaluate your preference level toward breastfeeding
- A space to write down your questions about breastfeeding

“Be sure to bring this guide to your medical appointments so you may discuss with your healthcare professional about your concerns, preferences or to ask for support.”

— Your partner’s participation is strongly recommended —

Section 3. Feeding plan:

Download your “Wish to breastfeed” or your “Feeding plan” available on the CISSS de l’Outaouais website. It will be useful during the first days of your baby’s life so that the health professionals working around you can support you and respect your choices. A QR code will be provided at the end of this brochure.

Your partner’s participation is strongly recommended.

Section 1. Information

The Canadian Pediatric Society, WHO and Health Canada recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, with continued breastfeeding along with introducing appropriate complementary foods for up to two years of age or longer.

Breast milk is slowly and naturally prepared in the woman's body after childbirth. In the first few days, a small quantity of colostrum will be enough to feed your baby.

Milk production increases rapidly between the second and the fifth day after giving birth. This is when the milk "comes in". Breast milk is a unique milk adapted to your baby's evolving needs. Its benefits are recognizable until adulthood. It is excellent protection for life.

Remember, you have the ability to feed your child.

“90% of women who gave birth in Quebec chose to breastfeed.”

Involving your partner in the preparation for breastfeeding with skin-to-skin, hygiene care and applying these basic tips, will allow you to have a good start with breastfeeding:

- Breastfeed 8 to 12 times a day
- Place baby skin-to-skin as often as possible
- Give colostrum every hour if baby is drowsy or unable to nurse
- Offer the breast at the first signs of hunger
- Leave the baby on the breast as long as they want (suckling)
- Try different breastfeeding positions to see what works for you and your baby
- Express colostrum manually
- Undress baby to breastfeed
- Avoid supplements (give only breast milk)
- Avoid pacifiers until breastfeeding is well established
- Sleep when baby is sleeping
- Have the latch checked by a professional who is trained in breastfeeding
- Compress breast while breastfeeding, to increase milk transfer.
- Use the breast pump if necessary, according to your needs
- Learn to recognize your baby's hunger signs
- Learn to recognize a good latch
- Remember, the nurses are there to help you. They have advanced training in breastfeeding
- A lactation consultant is available if needed

The importance of breastfeeding

For the baby:

1. Antibodies. Breast milk contains antibodies and other factors that help the baby's immune system. The more breast milk the baby receives, the greater this protective effect, which can continue even after breastfeeding has ended.

2. Less health risks for the baby. Breastfed babies are less likely to suffer from: anemia, gastroenteritis, diarrhea, respiratory diseases (colds, bronchitis, etc.) and ear infections.

3. Breastfed children are better protected against several chronic diseases (eczema, type 1 diabetes, Crohn's disease).

4. Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

5. Breastfeeding decreases the risk of becoming obese.

“Breastfeeding strengthens the bond of attachment. The act of breastfeeding allows skin-to-skin contact between the parent and the baby.”

Remember that the benefits of breastfeeding are proportionally related to the intensity and duration of breastfeeding. The more breastmilk you give your baby and the longer you breastfeed, the greater the health protections.

For the parent:

1. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of hemorrhage (excessive bleeding) after childbirth.

2. Exclusive and prolonged breastfeeding can help the breastfeeding parent to lose the weight gained during pregnancy.

3. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

4. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases.

5. People who breastfeed are also less likely to develop anemia, because breastfeeding delays the return of menstruation.

6. A practical choice for the baby, because the milk is available without delay and at all times: when they are hungry, the baby does not have to wait. It is also practical for parents: there is nothing to clean, prepare, store or warm up.

7. It is economical, there is no milk to buy. Even if the parent goes out without their child, milk can be expressed (“pumped”) and another person can give it to the child during its absence.

8. It is ecological: It leaves no waste and requires no transport.

Risks of choosing not to breastfeed:



The World Health Organization (WHO) Code of marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes requires parents to be informed of the health hazards of unnecessary or incorrect use of formula for infants.

Here are the main risks associated with commercial infant formula.

Increased risks of :

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Infection from contaminated formula
- Acute respiratory illness
- Allergies
- Childhood cancers
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Mortality linked to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Gastrointestinal infections
- Obesity
- Otitis media and ear infections
- Chronic diseases
- Side effects from environmental contaminants
- Developing necrotizing enterocolitis in premature infants
- Limited intellectual development

For more information on the risks associated with not breastfeeding, consult the INSPQ website at <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/node/1942>

Alternatives of breastfeeding directly to the breast

Exclusively pumping:

Is when a parent chooses not to nurse the baby directly at the breast and instead gives exclusively expressed breast milk to baby with a bottle.

- This option allows the parent who, for various reasons, is not comfortable nursing at the breast but still wants to give their own milk to their baby.

However, it's good to know that:

- Nursing at the breast, gives the baby an immunological advantage, since contact with baby's saliva and the nipple will allow the breast tissue to screen various possible infections in baby and create specific antibodies to protect baby.
- The mechanism behind suckling at the breast, promotes development of optimal oro-facial structures.

Partial or mixed breastfeeding:

Partial breastfeeding or mixed breastfeeding is when the baby feeds on breast milk and commercial infant formula everyday. Although exclusive breastfeeding remains the optimal way to feed your baby, partial breastfeeding may be the only way to continue breastfeeding.

- This can allow the parent and their baby to enjoy breastfeeding longer.
- A parent may choose partial breastfeeding for a variety of reasons and for a varying period of time.
- It is possible to give breastmilk directly at the breast, by cup or bottle and to give commercial infant formula by cup or bottle.

However, whatever the reason that leads you to opt for partial breastfeeding, it is good to know that:

- The more your baby feeds from the breast, the more the milk production is maintained.
- Giving commercial infant formula everyday decreases milk production, since the breast is less stimulated.
- Some babies slowly lose interest in breastfeeding when the milk production is less generous.
- Some babies show higher interest in bottles and abandon the breast even if the production of milk is abundant.
- The risk of nipple confusion is very real.

Complete cessation of breastfeeding can happen sooner than expected.

Commercial infant formula:

- Some women consider breastfeeding inappropriate for their situation, even though they know of its benefits. Others have breastfed for a few days/weeks and no longer wish to continue because it is not going as they would have wished or imagined.
- Infant formula is a breastmilk substitute usually made from cow's milk protein. These formulas are adapted to the basic nutritional needs of the infant compared to breast milk, which meets all the infant's needs.
- Commercial infant formula is a safe substitute that meets your baby's needs if you choose not to breastfeed. Their preparation requires special attention (cleaning and sterilizing of bottles, expiry date, storage, etc.) It is important to give iron-fortified milk-based formula to all babies who are not breastfed until the age of 9 to 12 months.

***Plant based milks or cow's whole milk, are not a suitable alternative to formula and should not be given to babies before 9 months of life.**

Section 2. Motivation

Think about what is important to you!

- Read the contents of the list. In the ‘other’ section, you can enter other elements that seem important to you in making the decision to breastfeed or not.

Place a number in the box that corresponds to the importance you are according to each element. Do not hesitate to consult the information contained in this guidebook to help you in the reflection process.

What are your main concerns about breastfeeding?

With the following scale, write the number that corresponds to the value you would give for each suggestion in the following tables

1. Not important
2. Important
3. Very important

Things to consider (Suggestions)

Have immediate skin-to-skin contact with baby after delivery	
Avoid commercial infant formula	
Feeding my child food that meets all their growth needs	
Having access to food available at all times and without any delays	
Reduce the risk of gastrointestinal and upper respiratory tract infections for my child	
Reduce the risk of hemorrhage after childbirth	
Promote the expulsion of meconium (baby's first thick and black stools)	
Have a rapid post-partum recovery	
Reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)	
Have a practical choice: nothing to clean, prepare, store or warm-up	
Have an ecological choice: without waste	

Things to consider (following)

Making an economical choice : nothing to buy	
Expose my baby to different tastes present in my milk thanks to my varied diet	
Be able to comfort my baby at any time (injury, vaccine, fatigue, etc.)	
Allow my baby to develop a healthy circadian rhythm (sleep/awake cycle)	
Develop a bond of attachment more quickly with my baby	
Protect my baby from the risk of allergy	
Promote good digestion in my newborn	
Reduce the risk of cancer for my baby and me	
Accelerate the recovery of my child if they are sick	

What are your concerns about feeding your newborn...

Fear of being too tired	
Fear of not having enough milk	
Fear of having pain	
Fear that my baby is hungry or won't drink enough	
I smoke	
Partner can not get involved	
Other:	

What is your preference?

After reading the information provided and after answering the questions in the previous exercise, place an "X" on the preference scale from 1 to 10 to measure your preference level to exclusive breastfeeding.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I prefer to use a commercial formula to feed my child

I am unsure and need to seek more information

I prefer exclusive breastfeeding to feed my child

The choice of how to feed your baby is up to you. Whatever your choice, your baby needs your love. Place your baby skin-to-skin during the day, sing to them and take your bath with them. These little moments of pure happiness will satisfy their needs for affection, security and warmth.

Your questions for the staff

(Nurses, doctor, midwife)

Write down all the concerns and fears for which you need clarification in order to help you in your decision-making:

Section 3: Breastfeeding plan

Download your breastfeeding wishes or your feeding plan on the CISSS de l'Outaouais website by scanning the following QR code or using the following hyperlink.

My wish to breastfeed



My plan to feed my baby



<https://cisss-outaouais.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/My-wish-to-breastfeed.pdf>

<https://cisss-outaouais.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/My-plan-to-feed-my-baby.pdf>

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