Mercy Health
Care first

When baby does not attach at the breast

Sometimes a newborn baby may not attach to the breast straight away.

It can be normal for babies to take a few days to learn to breastfeed well. You can give your expressed breastmilk (EBM) until your baby is ready to breastfeed.

How will I give my breastmilk?

You can use a cup, spoon or syringe (with finger) to give small amounts of your breastmilk. Your midwife can show you how to do this.

While you are in hospital

- Placing your baby skin-to-skin on your bare chest can help baby find the breast and help your milk to flow. Take off all of baby's clothes except their nappy.
- Aim to feed your baby at least 8 times in 24 hours; offer a breastfeed when your baby shows early feeding cues.
- You can offer the baby your breast, but do not worry if baby does not attach.
- If baby does not attach, express your breasts at least 8 times in 24 hours – this tells your body to start making milk:
  - First start expressing your breasts by hand and if your baby keeps having trouble attaching you can also use an electric pump– your midwife will teach you how to express, by hand and by pump.
  - Express each breast until the milk flow stops. Swap back and forth between breasts for up to 30 minutes.
  - Expressing your breasts often, can prevent them from getting too full and sore when your milk comes in.

> **Remember:** **more milk out = more milk made**

See the '*Expressing breastmilk'* patient handout for more tips on expressing.

How much milk does my baby need?

Healthy babies do not need large amounts of milk in the first two to three days:

- The first 48 hours – start with the small amount of colostrum (the first or early milk) you can express.
- 48-72 hours – your breasts will start to make more milk.
- Give more breastmilk if your baby shows feeding cues.
- Your midwife will guide you on how much milk to give to your baby.

When you are at home

You will receive a 'Plan for breastfeeding your baby after discharge' handout. This will give you guidance for feeding your baby if they are continuing to have difficulty attaching to the breast at the time you are going home.

- Continue with what you were doing in hospital by expressing your breastmilk using a breast pump and feeding your baby this breastmilk.
- You will be guided to give larger amounts of breastmilk each day as your baby grows.
- You can hire a hospital grade breast pump or buy a personal pump to express your milk. There are many different types. Ask your midwife for more information.
- You can book an appointment with the Breastfeeding Support Service if you need further feeding assistance after you leave hospital (see phone numbers below).

Bottle feeding your breastfed baby

Using a bottle with a slow flow teat may be helpful to give larger amounts of milk.

A long and thin teat is recommended as it will sit deeper in your baby's mouth.

When feeding baby by bottle:
- Hold the baby in close to you.
- Sit the baby up with their head slightly tilted back.
- Touch the baby's lips with the teat.
- Wait for a wide open mouth before placing the teat into the baby's mouth.
- The baby should have nearly all the teat in their mouth.
- The baby may want to rest a few times during the feed. Let the baby set the pace.
- Ask your midwife for the 'Paced bottle feeding' handout.

Useful websites and apps
- Australian Breastfeeding Association
  - breastfeeding.asn.au
  - Mum2mum app
- Raising Children Network
  - raisingchildren.net.au