

Syringe and cup feeding your baby

We encourage all new mums to breastfeed their babies. If your baby is finding it difficult to breastfeed, you will be shown other ways of giving your baby breastmilk.

Expressing your breastmilk by hand, for example, will ensure a good milk supply for your baby. You can give your breast milk using a small, 1ml (millilitre) sterilised syringe or a sterilised feeding cup, depending on the amount of milk you are giving your baby.



Syringe feeding

Syringe feeding should be used during the first few days when you need to give your baby small amounts of colostrum or breast milk (less than 3 to 5 mls).

How to syringe feed your baby

Please wash and dry your hands thoroughly before you start.

You need to hold your baby in an upright position and gently syringe no more than 0.2mls (millilitres) into your baby's mouth at a time. Feed the milk in between their gum and cheek or onto their tongue. Allow your baby to swallow before giving them another 0.2mls (millilitres) and continue to do this until the feed has ended.



Cup feeding

A feeding cup should be used when your baby needs to have feeds greater than 3 to 5mls (millilitres).

In order to protect breastfeeding, it is beneficial to use a cup rather than a bottle with a teat.

Cup feeding encourages your baby to use their tongue and lower jaw in a similar way as they would when breastfeeding. They are also able to smell and enjoy the milk when using a cup.

How to cup feed your baby

Please wash and dry your hands thoroughly before you start, and use a pre-sterilised, once-only cup at each feed.



Wrap your baby securely in a blanket to keep its hands out of the way so that it does not knock the cup out of your hands.

Sit your baby in an upright position on your lap to prevent choking and place a bib around your baby's neck.



Place the cup so that it is gently resting on your baby's lower lip. Do not press it down. The cup should be tipped so that the milk touches your baby's lip. Wait and your baby will sniff the milk, push their tongue forward and start to lap or drink the milk.

Do not tip the milk into their mouth as this may cause them to choke. Keep your baby sat upright and the cup still. Do not move the cup away when they stop drinking.

Your baby will drink at their own pace with breaks when they will have a breather. At the end of the feed they may close their mouth to show that they have finished.

Bottle-feeding

We suggest that you avoid giving your baby a teat until breastfeeding has been established, as sucking on a teat uses a different sucking action. This may cause confusion for your baby, who may then find it difficult to feed from the breast.

Some babies have difficulty changing between bottle feeds and breast feeds and some do not. Every baby is different and breastfeeding experts disagree on how much confusion this causes for a baby.

You should always offer the breast and continue skin-to-skin contact to help encourage feeding at the breast.