off to the best start

Important information about feeding your baby
the best start for your baby

What happens in your baby’s first years has a big effect on how healthy he or she will be in the future.

Mum’s milk gives your baby all the nutrients he or she needs for around the first 6 months of life (and it’s important beyond 6 months too). It helps to protect your baby from infection and other diseases, and as a mum, it also reduces your chances of getting some illnesses later in life.

Infant formula is made from cows’ milk and other ingredients. It doesn’t contain the ingredients that help protect your baby from infection and disease. Only your body can make those.

Breastfeeding also helps you and your baby to get closer – physically and emotionally. So while you are feeding your baby, the bond between you grows stronger.
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what does breastfeeding help protect against?

Your milk is perfect and uniquely made for your growing baby's needs. Giving your milk to your baby makes a big difference to both your baby's health and yours. And every day counts: the longer you feed your baby mum's milk, the more they benefit.

Babies who are NOT breastfed have an increased chance of:

- Diarrhoea and vomiting and having to go to hospital as a result
- Chest infections and having to go to hospital as a result
- Ear infections
- Being fussy about new foods
- Being constipated
- Being obese which means they are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes and other illnesses later in life
- Developing eczema
Breastfeeding is good news for mums as:

- It lowers the risk of mum getting breast and ovarian cancer
- It naturally uses up about 500 extra calories a day so mums who breastfeed often find it easier to lose their pregnancy weight
- It saves money – formula feeding can cost as much as £45 a month
after your baby is born

Holding your baby against your skin straight after birth will calm your baby. It will also steady his breathing and help to keep him warm.

This is a great time to start your first breastfeed because your baby will be alert and want to feed within a couple of hours of birth. Your midwife can help you with this.

Your baby will be happier if you keep him near you and feed him whenever he is hungry. This will remind your body to produce plenty of milk.
What position should you use?

There are lots of different positions for breastfeeding. You just need to check the following:

Are your baby's head and body in a straight line?
If not, your baby might not be able to swallow easily.

Are you holding your baby close to you?
Support his neck, shoulders and back. He should be able to tilt his head back easily. And he shouldn't have to reach out to feed.
Are you comfortable?
It's worth getting comfortable before a feed, although it's ok to change your position slightly once the baby is attached to the breast.

Is your baby's nose opposite your nipple?
Your baby needs to get a big mouthful of breast from underneath the nipple. Placing your baby with his nose level with your nipple will allow him to reach up and attach to the breast well.
1. Hold your baby’s whole body close with his nose level with your nipple.

2. Let your baby’s head tip back a little so that his top lip can brush against your nipple. This should help your baby to make a wide open mouth.

3. When your baby’s mouth opens wide, his chin is able to touch your breast first, with his head tipped back so that his tongue can reach as much breast as possible.

4. With his chin firmly touching and his nose clear, his mouth is wide open and there will be much more of the darker skin visible above your baby’s top lip than below his bottom lip. Your baby’s cheeks will look full and rounded as they feed.