



ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING

Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants as it contains essential nutrients, protects them from illness, and provides many other long-term health benefits for both mother and infant.

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of life. From six months, solid iron-rich foods can be introduced to complement the breastmilk diet. Continued breastfeeding is recommended throughout the first year and beyond, based on the needs and desires of both mother and infant.

Health benefits

Breastmilk supports the development of an infants' immune system and can help protect infants from gastro-intestinal and middle ear infections. Breastfeeding is associated with lower rates of allergic conditions such as eczema and asthma. Breastfeeding has long term benefits; with breastfed infants being less likely to become overweight or obese later in life.

Breastfeeding can be an important factor in bonding between mother and infant and has health benefits for the mother including a reduced risk of some cancers (breast and ovarian) and can also assist mothers to return to their pre-pregnancy weight.

The right to breastfeed is protected under federal and state legislation.

Early childhood education and care services can NOT:

- Refuse an application for an early childhood education and care service place, or not offer a place, because an infant is breastfed.
- Discourage a mother from continuing to breastfeed or refuse to let a mother breastfeed or express breastmilk on the premises.
- Refuse to feed an infant its mother's expressed breastmilk.
- Do anything else that makes it difficult for families to continue giving breastmilk to an infant while they are in the service's care.

If you are returning to work, speak to your employer about how they can support you to continue to breastfeed.

Early childhood services can support mothers to continue to breastfeed by:

- Developing policies that encourage and support continued breastfeeding.
- Asking families about breastfeeding at the time of first contact or enrolment, and informing families that the service is supportive of receiving expressed breastmilk or visits during the day from mothers to breastfeed.
- Providing a private, clean and quiet place for mothers to breastfeed their infants or express breastmilk. The place will include an electrical outlet, comfortable chair and nearby access to hand washing facilities.
- Developing an individual breastfeeding support plan / feeding management plan with families for their infant.
- Up-skilling their educators to ensure they are aware of the benefits of breastfeeding and can appropriately store, handle and feed expressed breastmilk.





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Tips for mothers:

- It is important to remember that you do not have to stop breastfeeding when your infant begins attending an early childhood service and that service staff will support you to continue to breastfeed, if you choose.
- Exclusive breastfeeding till around six months of age means that infants do not require any other fluids, including water.
- While exclusive breastfeeding is recommended, it is important to note that ANY breastfeeding is considered beneficial for the infant and mother.
- Infants (birth to 12 months) who are not breastfed need an infant formula. Cow's milk is not recommended until after 12 months of age.
- Breastmilk can be expressed using your hand, with a hand pump or with an electric pump. To assist with the transition, practice expressing breastmilk before your infant enters into care.
- When providing expressed breastmilk, make sure it is in a sterilised plastic bottle, in an insulated container, with a freezer brick and is clearly labelled with your infants name and the date it was expressed.
- Introduce your infant to a bottle of expressed breastmilk before entering care. If your infant does not take to the bottle, try providing expressed breastmilk using a spoon. A cup is suitable for infants over six months of age.
- Service educators may experience some initial difficulties with the infant not taking the bottle at the service – if this is the case they may ask you to leave something (like an item of clothing that smells like you) to make the situation feel more familiar to your infant.
- Continue to breastfeed as normal on days when your infant is not in care and before and after on days when your infant is in care.

For support or additional information please visit:

Service	Contact Details
Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)	National Breastfeeding Helpline Ph: 1800 686 268 www.breastfeeding.asn.au Breastfeeding and Returning to Work www.breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace
Tresillian	24 Hour Parents Helpline Ph: 1300 272 736 www.tresillian.org.au
Karitane	Karitane Care Line Ph: 1300 227 464 www.karitane.org.au
Mothersafe	Medications in Pregnancy and Lactation Service Ph: 1800 647 848
Healthy Kids	www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au
Raising Children Network	www.raisingchildren.net.au



Sources:

Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) and Australian Dietary Guidelines, (2013) NHMRC.
Australian Breastfeeding Association: www.breastfeeding.asn.au