

Breastfeeding Your Toddler

Human milk is an important part of your growing toddler's diet, even after he's started solid foods. Breastfeeding also offers comfort and builds attachment, which helps your toddler grow into a more confident child.

It's Important for Your Toddler

Human milk:

- ✓ is a natural and nutritious food for your toddler
- ✓ is all the food your child needs for the first 6 months, and continues to be important for 2 years or more
- ✓ supports your toddler's immune system
- ✓ protects your toddler from some infections
- ✓ supports your toddler's healthy growth

It's Important for You

Breastfeeding:

- ✓ may lower your risk of diseases like breast and ovarian cancers
- ✓ is free and convenient
- ✓ helps you bond with your toddler



DID YOU KNOW

Toddlers that are breastfed or breastfed and given infant formula need a liquid vitamin D supplement of 400 IU every day. Talk with your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you have questions.

Can I Breastfeed my Toddler if...?

...I return to work

Yes. Try breastfeeding before you leave for work and when you return home. Or express your milk at work, store it, and have your caregiver give it to your toddler the next day.

...I take prescribed medication

Most medications are safe to take while breastfeeding, but talk with your doctor, public health nurse or pharmacist, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to be sure.

...we're in public

Yes. Under the Human Rights Code, you have the right to breastfeed anywhere, at anytime.

...I'm pregnant

Yes. Talk with your health care provider to help ensure you're getting enough nutrition for your unborn child, your breastfeeding toddler and yourself. Take a prenatal supplement. And don't worry if your milk looks a bit different and your supply decreases around your fourth or fifth month. This is due to the normal hormonal changes of pregnancy.

... I breastfeed my new baby

Yes. If you want to, you can "tandem nurse" – breastfeed a new baby and an older child at the same time. This can be a good way to connect with both children. In the first few days after giving birth, make feeding your newborn the priority to make sure she gets all the nutrition

and antibodies in your colostrum. After that, continue to watch your newborn's weight to ensure she's getting enough to eat.

...my child bites or is teething

Yes. If your toddler bites, remove him from your breast and firmly tell him that biting hurts you. Then try again. You may have to repeat this message a few times before the biting stops. Biting may mean that he's teething (see [Looking After Your Toddler's Teeth](#)), ill or finished feeding. He can't bite if he's properly latched and sucking, so remove him from the breast as soon as he's done.

...I smoke

Breastfeeding is recommended, even if you smoke. In fact, human milk can lower some of the risks that smoking poses to your toddler.

If you smoke, though, you expose your child to second-hand smoke and to the nicotine and other substances that pass through your milk. Smoking can also reduce the amount of milk you produce and lead to earlier weaning. Quitting or cutting down is healthy for you and your baby. If you can't quit, reduce your baby's exposure by breastfeeding before you smoke, keeping your car and home smoke-free, and washing your hands after smoking. For information on how to quit or reduce the amount you smoke, visit [quitnow.ca](#).

...I drink alcohol

The safest choice is not to drink alcohol while breastfeeding. Alcohol may decrease the amount of milk you produce and affect your

baby's sleep and development. If you are going to have a drink, pump or express and store your milk before you have any alcohol. Wait 2 to 3 hours *per drink* before breastfeeding again.



DID YOU KNOW

Pumping or expressing your milk doesn't speed up how fast alcohol leaves your body. Only time will get rid of alcohol from human milk. Any milk that you pump or express while drinking or in the 2 to 3 hours following drinking – or longer if you've had more than 1 drink – should be thrown away.

...I use cannabis (marijuana)

Cannabis use isn't advised if you breastfeed. The THC in cannabis stays in your breastmilk for up to 30 days and can be passed on to your toddler. And because the THC remains for so long, expressing and destroying your milk ("pumping and dumping") doesn't work to make it safe for your child, either. It's not yet known whether CBD is transferred into breastmilk, or what effect it might have on your toddler.

Cannabis may:

- leave THC in your breastmilk for up to 30 days
- lead to issues with your child's motor development
- decrease your milk supply
- make you drowsy and unable to respond to your toddler's needs

Lower the risks for you and your baby by:

- not using cannabis if you breastfeed. If you need help to quit, talk with your health care provider.
- using less cannabis, and using it less often
- not using cannabis with tobacco or other substances or with medications
- choosing lower-potency products that have higher levels of CBD and lower levels of THC. But be aware that even CBD-only products haven't been proven safe while breastfeeding.

...I use street drugs

Street drugs can pass through your milk and affect your toddler. If you use street drugs and would like support and information about how to safely breastfeed your toddler, talk with a trusted health care provider.



FAMILY STORY

The best times of my day are when I get to breastfeed my toddler before and after a busy day at work. It's a chance for us to connect, reinforce our bond and snuggle.



FAMILY STORY

When my toddler is pulled in close to my body to breastfeed, I forget about the rough-and-tumble kid. He's my baby again, even if only for a moment.

Finding Help

To get the support you need to help you breastfeed your toddler with confidence, look to:

- your health care provider
- other moms who have breastfed toddlers
- breastfeeding support groups (see [Resources](#))
- a public health nurse
- a lactation consultant ([bclca.ca](#))
- HealthLink BC (call 8-1-1)
- hospital breastfeeding clinics
- La Leche League ([lllc.ca](#))
- the Breastfeeding section in *Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care*

