

## Mixed feeding: Supplementing breastfeeding with formula (0–18 months)

---

### Why you might decide to supplement breastfeeding with formula

Mixed feeding or supplementing with formula is when you feed your baby small amounts of infant formula, as well as your breastmilk.

Breastfeeding has many benefits for babies and their mums. If you're unable to breastfeed your baby, you might be able to give your baby expressed milk.

However, in some cases, a health professional might recommend mixed feeding – for example, if your baby:

- has a very low birth weight (under 1500 gm)
- is born very premature (at less than 32 weeks of gestational age)
- is very ill
- isn't gaining weight well.

Many new mums consider mixed feeding because they worry about their milk supply, especially if their babies cry after feeds or their breasts feel empty. However, it's very rare for mums to be unable to produce enough breastmilk.

### Before you try mixed feeding

If you're considering mixed feeding because you're concerned you don't have enough milk, first check your baby's nappies and weight gains. Your baby is getting enough milk if he:

- has at least 6-8 wet cloth nappies or five very wet disposables in 24 hours
- has bowel motions every day (if he's younger than 6-8 weeks old)
- is gaining weight at about the right rate (check with your paediatrician)
- is alert and mostly happy after and between feeds.

Regular mixed feeding might make it more difficult to keep breastfeeding because it can interfere with keeping up a good supply of breastmilk. So, if you're thinking about supplementing with formula, it's important to talk about it first with your lactation consultant or GP or paediatrician.

You might talk about:

- how to boost your milk supply
- how much formula to give your baby
- how many times a day to give formula

- how many days to give formula.

### Mixed feeding: Tips

When your baby has a feed from a bottle of formula and not from your breast, you might notice your breasts getting overfull, which can be painful and can cause your body to stop producing milk.

**Expressing your breastmilk** will stop your breasts from becoming engorged and help keep your milk supply up.

You might also find that your baby prefers the bottle to the breast, and then refuses the breast. You could try these ideas to keep your baby feeding from the breast:

- Relax and be as patient as you can.
- Try a new feeding position.
- Hand-express some milk into your baby's mouth. This might encourage him to feed.
- Give your baby a breastfeed after his bath, when he's warm and relaxed.
- Try breastfeeding in a quiet place.
- Play some relaxing background music, or feed in a rocking chair.
- Offer a feed when your baby is first stirring from sleep or just going to sleep.
- Try again later when your baby is more settled. Forcing the issue can make breast refusal worse.

### Tips for increasing breastfeeding while doing mixed feeding

If you're ready to increase breastfeeding again and reduce the amount of formula feeding your baby has, talk with your lactation consultant or paediatrician.

How quickly you cut back on formula depends on why you're supplementing with formula, how old your baby is and how much formula your baby is having.

To cut back on formula, you can try:

- gradually increasing your milk supply by expressing after breastfeeding
- increasing how often you breastfeed your baby
- gradually reducing the amount of formula you offer in each bottle or cutting out some formula feeds.