

Achieving Your Breastfeeding Goals

Breastfeeding provides the very best food for babies to six months of age, and for young children up to two years and older, with the addition of age-appropriate foods. As the person who provides breast milk, you also benefit. You will be less likely to have serious illnesses, such as breast and ovarian cancers or diabetes. Breastfeeding can also help you with contraception and spacing pregnancies.

Many things can impact your success in reaching your breastfeeding goals, such as:

- Past experience(s) with breastfeeding
- How confident you are in your ability to breastfeed
- Available support from a partner, family member, or friend
- Access to trained breastfeeding support, such as a nurse or a peer (typically someone with breastfeeding experience)
- Feelings about exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding beyond six months with the addition of other foods.



What are the benefits of receiving breastfeeding support and information from nurses, other health-care providers and peers?

Studies have shown that support and information from nurses, other health-care providers (such as your physician) and breastfeeding peers have many benefits both for those who are breastfeeding an infant or child for the first time and those with experience. These benefits include:

- Increased rates of starting and continuing to breastfeed for a longer amount of time, including exclusive breastfeeding to six months
- Having more reasons for wanting to breastfeed
- Being more likely to overcome breastfeeding challenges, such as sore nipples or concerns about not making enough breast milk.

What information do you need to support your breastfeeding goals?

In whatever way you choose to learn about breastfeeding, there are many topics you may want to explore, including:

- The importance of breastfeeding as a source of food for your baby and as a way to show love and comfort
- Normal baby behaviours, including hunger cues, and how to respond
- How your body makes breast milk
- The how-to's of hand expressing breast milk
- The roles your partner, family members, or friends can play in supporting you
- How to manage breastfeeding challenges, such as breast fullness or sore nipples

Try and learn as much as possible about breastfeeding starting in pregnancy and continuing after you have had your baby. This will give you more opportunities to ask questions as your baby grows.

Learning more about breastfeeding can be a helpful approach to support reaching your breastfeeding goals. People who learn about breastfeeding were almost twice as likely to breastfeed exclusively to six months.

Find What Works Best For You

Your breastfeeding support and information needs must be right for you. Each person who breastfeeds has different needs – some want help with instruction, how-to's, getting questions answered or receiving emotional support and encouragement. This can change over time as you learn and feel surer of yourself. It is important to find what works for you and feel supported to be able to reach your breastfeeding goals.

This health education fact sheet was developed using content from the RNAO best practice guideline (BPG) *Breastfeeding - Promoting and Supporting the Initiation, Exclusivity, and Continuation of Breastfeeding for Newborns, Infants and Young Children* (2018). Its purpose is to provide you with information and to help you make decisions regarding your health. All of RNAO's BPGs are available for public viewing and free download at <https://rnao.ca/bestpractices>. The breastfeeding BPG is available at <https://rnao.ca/bpg/guidelines/breastfeeding-promoting-and-supporting-initiation-exclusivity-and-continuation-breast>