



FOOD AND MEALS for infants



Helsedirektoratet

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Offer your baby foods with different textures and flavours in the first year.

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Dear Parents,

This booklet is for all parents of babies and toddlers. It provides a guide to infant feeds and foods, mealtimes, nutrition and care in the first 12 months after the birth of your baby.

The advice is based on recommendations in the 2016 Norwegian national guideline on infant nutrition (*Nasjonalt faglig retningslinje for spedbarns ernæring*). The national guideline (currently only in Norwegian) is available on the website of the Norwegian Directorate of Health: [Helsedirektoratet.no/retningslinjer](https://helsedirektoratet.no/retningslinjer).

More information about breastfeeding, baby food and nutrition is available from [Helsenorge.no](https://helsenorge.no) and other websites referred to in the booklet.

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Did you know that...

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- Breast milk is best for baby! You can safely feed your baby nothing but breast milk and vitamin D supplements for the first six months, as long as mummy and baby are thriving on this.
 - If food other than breast milk is needed, infant formula is the only alternative for the first four months.
 - Partial breastfeeding is also good for baby - and mum too.
 - If additional food to breast milk is needed after your baby has reached four months, you can start introducing solid foods.
 - When baby is six months, you should start offering other food in addition to breast milk/infant formula.
 - If possible, babies should be breastfed for their first year of life, and ideally for longer if baby is thriving - and mum too.
 - However, you should talk to a health care professional about how to apply these recommendations to your child.
-

A good start in life - baby's first year

The first year is the foundation for lifelong health. Your role is to raise your child as a healthy and happy eater with good eating habits.

The interaction between an infant and its parents influences how the growing child learns about eating situations and food. Parents, brothers and sisters and others around the child are role models and their values and attitudes to food will make all the difference.

It is safe and beneficial for babies to be given only breast milk and a vitamin D supplement for the first six months, if baby thrives on that – and mum too. Some babies need more than breast milk to satisfy their need for energy and nutrients. During the first four months, this should be infant formula. Solid foods must not be introduced before your baby is four months old (see page 22). Solid foods, or ‘solids’, means all food other than breast milk/infant formula.

Babies who were born prematurely or who have a low birth weight may also require other supplements. The hospital will provide guidance on what your baby needs.

Solids should be introduced gradually when your baby is six months. Baby's meals should be varied, served at regular intervals and the portions adjusted for age and level of activity. In addition to a healthy diet and family mealtimes, physical activity and enough sleep will be vital for your baby's growth and development, and for a happy family all round.





'Breast is Best'

Breast milk is the best food for babies. All breastfeeding - including partial breastfeeding - is beneficial for nursing mothers and babies.

Breast milk provides:

- the nutrients baby needs
 - protection from infection
 - components that benefit the developing immune system
 - hormones and enzymes that influence physiological development
-

Breast milk is beneficial for development of the infant immune response and brain, and reduces the risk of infection, obesity and diabetes.

Exclusive breastfeeding means only giving your baby breast milk and no other food or drink, with the exception of vitamins, minerals or medicines. Partial breastfeeding is when babies are given infant formula in addition to being breastfed.

As long as a baby is growing and thriving, and as long as breastfeeding is working out for the mother, there is no reason to offer any food or drink other than breast milk for the first six months. During this period, breast milk provides all the nutrition and fluids the child needs, with the exception of vitamin D. If you are vegetarian, your child may need other supplements. For more information, see page 14. Babies do not need water as a top-up to breastfeeding, even in a warm climate.



Breastfeeding

Some mothers are off to a good start with breastfeeding before they leave hospital after giving birth. For others it may take longer. Milk production is stimulated by the child regularly suckling at the breast.

Breastfeeding provides closeness and skin contact between mother and child. For the mother, breastfeeding makes the womb contract faster after the birth, delays the return of menstrual periods, and can make it easier for mum to return to her normal weight. If breastfeeding is a success, it can also help to prevent postnatal depression. In the longer term, for the mother, breastfeeding helps to reduce the risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Breastfeeding is also environmentally friendly, hygienic and practical, and does not cost anything.



Breastfeeding lying down: you and baby lie on your side, close to each other.



Conventional cradle position: tummy to tummy.



Twins position: baby on her side under your arm.

Advice for nursing mothers

A newborn should be allowed to decide when it needs a feed (breast-feeding on demand), but some babies are so sleepy that they should be stimulated to suckle.

Newborn babies should suckle often. Feeds may stop and start and become “breastfeeding sessions” rather than separate feeds. A newborn baby’s stomach is very small initially and can’t take big feeds. It is normal to feed 8-12 times or more in a 24-hour period in the first few weeks. For many infants, the number of feeds then goes down gradually. If your baby’s weight gain is normal, then he is getting enough to eat. It is hard to tell how much milk a breastfeeding baby is getting. In most cases, they get 600-800 ml every 24 hours.

If you have problems with breastfeeding, or you would like some guidance, talk to the midwife or public health service nurse when they are making home visits or at the health centre. Helpful advice and personal guidance is available (in Norwegian and English) from the Norwegian Mother-to-Mother Breastfeeding Support Group at Ammehjelpen.no.

Achieving a good breastfeeding position

Hold baby close to your body, tummy to tummy. Baby’s nose should be level with your nipple. Stroking the nipple against your baby’s mouth will trigger baby’s rooting reflex. This helps baby to open wide and latch on firmly around both the nipple and areola. Proper latching-on technique is important in ensuring that baby gets enough milk, and prevents sore nipples too.

Enough milk?

Milk production is stimulated by the child suckling and by the breasts being milked empty each time. If your baby signals that she needs another feed, for example by guzzling desperately or waking up soon after the last feed, you can nurse baby more frequently to stimulate an increase in milk production. This process of boosting your milk supply may take a few days.

Sometimes baby may show less interest in nursing, or you find you are producing less milk. If that happens, it is important to continue to nurse baby frequently and offer both breasts at each feed. Milk production will then usually increase.

Too much milk?

If you have more milk than baby wants, you can pump out the milk and freeze it for later use. Breast milk can be stored for up to six months in the freezer and for three to five days in the fridge.

It is of great value if you can donate surplus milk to newborns at a hospital. Ammehjelpen.no publishes a list of all of the breast milk banks in Norway. Here you can also find information about methods for reducing the amount of milk if you find this to be a problem.



Reclining position: lean back with baby lying on top of you, tummy to tummy.



This stimulates your baby's rooting reflex.



Cross-cradle position: support your baby's back.

A healthy and varied diet for mothers

Nursing mothers should maintain a varied, healthy diet and follow the standard dietary advice that applies to all adults.

If you eat oily fish or take omega-3 fatty acid supplements (in the form of cod liver oil, algae oil or other supplements), this will increase the amount of omega-3 fatty acids in your milk. These fatty acids are important for your baby's developing brain and nervous system. Because pregnancy and breastfeeding deplete your body's iron reserves, you should ensure that you are getting enough iron when breastfeeding. Good sources of iron are wholemeal bread, lean meat, fish, beans, lentils and peas. Meals consisting of vegetables and fruit that are rich in vitamin C will increase your iron uptake and increase the vitamin C content of your milk. Thirst is a good indicator of how much you need to drink. Good drinks are water, low-fat milk, juice and fruit teas. If you do not often eat certain foods such as fish and/or dairy products, you may need supplements. Read more about the nutrients you should be extra careful about getting enough of while you are breastfeeding, at [Helsenorge.no](https://www.helsenorge.no).

Vegetarian diet

A balanced vegetarian diet can cover all the nutritional requirements for both adults and children of all ages. If you are a strict vegetarian (vegan) and breastfeed, both you and your child will need vitamin B12, vitamin D and iodine supplements. Algae oil contains omega-3 fatty acids and can be used instead of cod liver oil.

Read more about vegetarian diets at [Helsenorge.no](https://www.helsenorge.no) and about supplements at [Hepla.no](https://www.hepla.no) (Norwegian health worker advocacy organisation for a plant-based diet) .



A healthy and varied diet benefits both mother and child during the breastfeeding period.



Ask another adult to take care of your baby if you have had any alcohol.



Drink fruit teas by all means, but keep hot drinks out of baby's reach.

Alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine and medicines

Nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, narcotic substances and many medicines pass into breast milk and can affect your baby. Breastfeeding is rarely contraindicated, even if mum is taking medicines. Consult a pharmacy or doctor or the website Tryggmammamedisin.no.

Limit your intake of coffee, tea and other caffeinated drinks like Coke and energy drinks. Avoid more than two cups a day. While it's best to avoid herbal teas, "fruit teas" like rose hip tea and fruit infusion tea are good alternatives. Fennel tea, often sold as "mother's milk tea" or "nursing tea", is not recommended.

You should avoid alcohol for the first six weeks, and later restrict your alcohol intake. You should wait three hours before you breastfeed your baby after you have had a glass of wine/beer (one unit of alcohol). The blood alcohol level in breast milk decreases at the same rate as your blood alcohol level does generally. The alcohol is not 'stored' in the milk. There is therefore no need to pump and discard milk (unless you have excess milk) before you can breastfeed again. Alcohol can make your baby more sleepy, but can also have a bad affect on baby's sleeping and eating habits. This in turn may slow your baby's growth.

You especially, but also your partner, should avoid smoking and using any other tobacco product. If you are unable to stop, you should still breastfeed because the benefits for your baby are so great and lasting. Make as long a gap as possible between using any tobacco product and breast-feeding. There are good aids available to help you quit smoking or snus. Read more at Helsenorge.no.

Infant formula

If you are breastfeeding, but your baby needs bigger feeds, then infant formula and vitamin D (as drops or cod liver oil) are the only supplements recommended for the first four months; solid foods should not be given at this stage of life.

If you feed your baby infant formula, continue with this until age 12 months. Feel free to give your baby breast milk in addition to infant formula. A baby who is exclusively fed infant formula should be given solids from the age of four months, so as to get used to different flavours. Infant formula tastes the same every time, whereas breast milk is flavoured by what the mother eats.

Infant formula is produced in such a way that it is as close as possible to breast milk. It contains all the essential nutrients, but lacks the active components of breast milk. Even a little breast milk as an addition to main feeds of infant formula is good for your baby. In order to increase/keep up your milk production, you should nurse from both breasts, before giving baby the infant formula.

Formula-fed babies should also be fed 'on demand', so you will need to be alert to your baby's signals. Hold baby close, ideally skin-to-skin. Follow the instructions on the package carefully and check that the baby bottle's teat is intact. Hold the bottle almost horizontally so that baby can easily take breaks during a feed (more information on "paced bottle feeding" is available in Norwegian and English from [Ammehjelpen.no](https://ammehjelpen.no), the Norwegian Mother-to-Mother breastfeeding support group). End the feeding when baby shows signs of being full. If you bottle-feed, use a teat with only a few holes so that baby has to make an effort to get the milk, just like a breast-fed baby.

Read more at [Helsenorge.no](https://helsenorge.no) and [Mattilsynet.no](https://mattilsynet.no).



By holding the bottle horizontally, baby gets to control the flow.



Bonding happens through closeness and eye contact.



Cup-feeding is a good alternative to bottle-feeding until breastfeeding is established.



Breast milk contains little vitamin D, so all babies need vitamin D supplements.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for your baby. All infants should be given daily vitamin D supplements from the age of four weeks.

Vitamin D is naturally found in oily fish and is generated in the skin when exposed to sunlight. Breast milk is low in vitamin D. Vitamin D supplements in the form of cod liver oil or vitamin D drops are recommended for all infants. This is especially important for breastfed children who get little sunlight.

A full teaspoon (5 ml) of cod liver oil provides the recommended daily amount of vitamin D, which is 10 µg (micrograms). Start with half a teaspoon (about 2.5 ml) from the age of four weeks and gradually increase this to 5 ml at six months. Follow the instructions on the bottle when using vitamin D drops. The children of parents from Asia, Africa and Latin-America receive vitamin D drops free of charge at the health centre.

Your child should not be given more than a total of 25 µg of vitamin D per day because this can be harmful over time. This means you must not give your child both cod liver oil and vitamin D drops or other supplements.

Infant formula provides approximately 1 µg of vitamin D per 100 ml of prepared infant formula. Some baby porridges are also fortified with vitamin D. Babies who are fed infant formula and/or baby porridge fortified with vitamin D should be given a reduced dose of cod liver oil or vitamin D drops.

Does baby need bigger feeds?

For babies who are only given breast milk (exclusively breastfed), there is no reason to wean them onto other food until they are six months old, as long as they are growing and thriving.

If your baby needs to be fed more, you should first try to increase the amount of breast milk by breastfeeding more often. Breastfeeding at night is an effective way of increasing your milk production. If baby still seems hungry after a few days, you may, if baby is at least four months old, carefully start introducing solid foods. Solids are preferable to infant formula, because they allow your baby to get to know different tastes and textures.

Signs that baby may be needing more to eat before the age of six months:

- inadequate weight gain or growth
- signs of hunger, even after frequent breastfeeds both day and night
- baby shows an interest in other food.

Signs that your baby is physically ready for solids:

- good head control
 - can sit upright and lean forwards
 - can signal that he is full by turning his head away for example
 - grabs food and tries to bring it up to his mouth.
-



Baby is able to sit and reach forwards.



Baby is able to grab food and bring it up to his mouth.



Let baby take active part in mealtimes.



Your baby at six months

When your baby is six months, he will need solid foods in addition to breast milk or infant formula to cover his energy and nutritional requirements.

It is good for baby to be given breast milk as the most important food for the entire first year and after that as part of a varied diet. You should therefore continue to nurse your baby even if you are offering other foods. Solid foods should be introduced gradually and the amount increased in line with baby's needs and signals. For 6-8 month babies, 2-3 meals per day are sufficient. From the age of nine months, baby can have 3-4 daily meals and, if needed, 1-2 healthy snacks.

Start with mini portions

The first meals might consist of just a little teaspoonful. Babies should be allowed to use their senses when they try new foods. You should therefore give baby plenty of time to look at, smell, touch and taste the food. Babies who become used to food with different textures and tastes from when they start eating solid foods will be less 'picky' in later childhood.

There is no fixed rule for the type of food your baby should start on. In the beginning, the food should be mashed and almost liquid. Babies typically start on runny porridge, mashed potato or vegetables which can be mixed with breast milk or infant formula. Offer your baby many different types of foods and offer these foods many times.

If baby objects to a food, wait a few days and try again. You must never force-feed a child. Allow your child to participate actively at mealtimes. A nice combination is to let baby eat unaided, in between spoon-feeding.

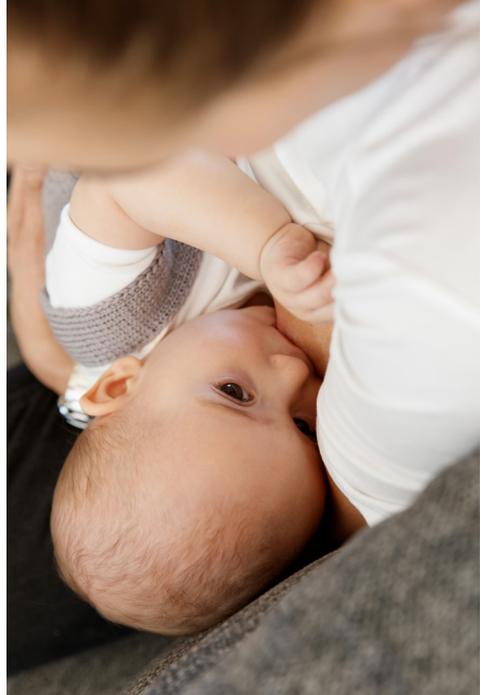
Dinner

Mini portions of mashed potato and vegetables can gradually be supplemented with meat, fish, beans, lentils or peas. This will give baby a protein-rich and nutritious meal. Vegetables provide important vitamins, and carrots, cauliflower and broccoli are ideal to serve. As an alternative to potatoes, you can serve wholemeal rice or pasta. Feel free to mix a little vegetable margarine or oil into the food. Avoid salt and salty foods, because baby's kidneys are not fully developed.

Porridges and breads

Babies are born with a reserve of iron in their bodies. Breast milk is low in iron, and after about six months, baby's iron reserves will be reduced. The first solids should therefore contain enough iron. If you make porridge yourself, use flour that is rich in iron, for example, oatmeal, whole wheat and millet. Switch between different types of grains. Industrially produced children's porridge is usually iron-fortified.

Breads can also be introduced when baby is able to chew little bites of bread. Serve wholemeal bread spread with soft vegetable margarine and toppings that are rich in iron, such as liver pate, lean cold cuts, fish toppings, vegetable pastes such as bean paste and lentil paste or nut butter. Your baby does not require sugary spreads such as jam and chocolate spreads. Foods that are rich in vitamin C for porridge and bread meals increase your baby's iron uptake. Examples are oranges, kiwifruit, strawberries, rose hip, blackcurrants, paprika, rutabaga, cauliflower and broccoli.





Let baby use her senses: see - touch - taste.



Offer your baby a wide variety of foods and offer them repeatedly.

Baby food pouches

Ready-made baby food in pouches is handy when travelling and for occasional variety, but should not replace home-made food on a regular basis. Baby food in a pouch does nothing to develop the motor skills needed for eating because your baby sucks out the food rather than chewing it. Your baby will also be missing out on the smell, texture and colour of different foods. In addition, baby may consume needless calories over a short space of time, and gain excess weight. Food pouches with sugary contents may harm your child's teeth.

Foods to wait with

There are some foods that you should wait to give your baby. Children under the age of one should not be given cow's milk as a drink or in porridge, because cow's milk is low in iron. Small amounts of cow's milk can be used in food a little earlier, from 10 months. From this age, children can also have a little yoghurt or other fermented milk product (approximately 50 ml per day). Children can drink low-fat milk or skimmed milk from age 12 months, as long as they are growing and healthy.

In the first year, all use of honey should be avoided due to the risk of a rare, but life-threatening, type of poisoning called infant botulism. Children should also not be given vegetables that are high in nitrate such as spinach, rocket salad, beetroot and nettle. Small and hard foods such as grapes, nuts, peanuts and pieces of raw vegetables/fruit should be avoided as a choking hazard. Avoid rice milk and rice cakes, and take care with cinnamon and raisins.

Read more about safe foods for infants at [Matportalen.no](https://matportalen.no).



Physical reactions to new foods

Introducing your baby to new foods may cause constipation or diarrhoea and nappy rash.

Constant crying, hives or a skin rash or wheezing may be signs that your baby has an intolerance to a certain food.

Food allergy and food intolerance

The same advice about breast milk and when to offer other foods applies to all children, regardless of the risk of food allergy or intolerance. Infant formula is suitable for all babies, including those at high risk of allergy (if at least one parent and/or one sibling has any allergy).

If a test shows that your baby is allergic to cow's milk, fully hydrolysed infant formula from the pharmacy is recommended for drinking and for preparing baby meals (consult your doctor). If baby is being breastfed, mum should also avoid drinking milk/cow's milk protein. Lactose intolerance is rare in children under the age of one.

All infants should be given foods that might cause allergy during the first year, i.e. eggs, fish, milk, nuts, peanuts, shellfish, soy and wheat. This also applies to those with a high risk of allergy. If there is a high risk of peanut allergy (children with serious eczema, egg allergies or both), any attempts to serve these potential allergens should only take place in consultation with a doctor.

If allergies or food intolerance are diagnosed by a doctor, these types of foods should be avoided. Talk to a public health service nurse or doctor if you are planning to exclude important foods.

Little struggles, bigger challenges

Possetting

Hungry babies tend to guzzle their food, and swallow a lot of air. The air has to come out, but since the sphincter in the stomach is weak in the first year, possetting (spitting up) can be a problem. A good 'burp' is needed for baby to expel excess air after the feed. It may also help to raise the head end of baby's cot so her upper body is elevated.

Constipation

Breast milk helps to produce healthy gut flora and good digestion. Exclusively breastfed babies often have frequent bowel movements (fill their nappies) during the first few weeks. Most babies fill their nappies or "poo" every day, but sometimes less frequently. For some, seven to ten days may pass between each bowel movement. As long as baby is gaining enough weight and is thriving, this is considered normal. Babies who are exclusively breastfed must not be fed anything other than breast milk and vitamins, and therefore no natural laxatives such as prune juice, malt extract etc.

Constipation is more common when babies are fed on infant formula. You can therefore try to change the brand of infant formula or try malt extract or prune juice. Make sure that baby gets enough to drink, preferably water. Wholegrain products, fruit, berries and vegetables are high in dietary fibre and should be part of your baby's daily diet from when you start serving solids. A lot of white bread, biscuits, pasta and pastries made from finely ground flour can cause constipation.





Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is loose and frequent stools and is often caused by a viral or bacterial infection in the intestines. If baby seems lethargic and his general condition deteriorates and the diarrhoea continues, contact a doctor or public health service nurse. Babies with diarrhoea can quickly become dehydrated and it is therefore important to keep up their fluids (breast milk, infant formula, water with apple juice) and possibly an electrolyte mixture from the pharmacy. Good foods to give sick babies are grated apple, blueberry puree, mashed carrot and rice.

If baby is a big eater

If your baby is exclusively breastfed, there is no cause for concern if she gains a lot of weight. Infants can safely grow plump and chubby from breast milk without this increasing the risk of overweight in the future. In fact, breastfeeding is known to prevent obesity in later childhood.

If your baby puts on a great deal of weight after being introduced to solids, it is important to serve healthy and varied food in the right amounts. Babies must not be put on diets. As babies start to move around more, their weight gain will be slower.

If baby is a small eater

After other food has been introduced, it is easy to become concerned if your baby eats less than expected. It is especially important for children who do not eat much that their food is healthy and nutritious, and contains enough iron. The portions may appear small, but 100 ml or slightly more is an adequate meal for children aged 6 to 12 months.

Babies must be given enough time to eat. Wake your baby well before meals to ensure that he is wide awake when it is time to eat. Feel free to mix a little oil or margarine into your baby's dinner. Squash, biscuits and other sugary foods and drinks contain few nutrients and can spoil your baby's appetite for the healthy food he needs in order to grow and develop.

Advice for healthy growth and weight gain

- Breastfeed your baby for the entire first year and ideally longer.
 - If baby is on infant formula, ensure that the amount of powder is in accordance with the instructions and never overdilute infant formula.
 - Pay attention to your baby's signals, including when baby is fed infant formula. Do not pressure your baby to feed more than he needs.
 - Give baby water as a thirst quencher when he has started taking food and drink other than breast milk and infant formula.
 - Fresh fruit and berries are preferable to juice. Avoiding giving your baby juice or squash in a bottle.
 - Give your baby wholegrain products, vegetables, beans and lentils.
 - Avoid sugary and fatty foods such as cakes, biscuits, ice cream, snacks and sugary drinks.
 - Adopt good routines, with fixed mealtimes and bedtimes.
 - Encourage your child to be physically active.
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Family mealtimes

Good mealtimes are a source of enjoyment, togetherness and contentment for everyone.

Families come in all sizes. Whether it's just you and baby or a big family, a good atmosphere and spending enough time at the table will help to make baby a healthy and happy eater and stimulate learning and socialisation.

Try to let your little one decide how much he wants to eat, but after the first few months of 'meals on demand', it is up to the parents to decide what and when baby is going to eat. For breastfed babies, being put to their mother's breast provides food, security and comfort. As your baby is introduced to solids, bear in mind that food mustn't be used for consolation or reward. In case of serious problems with food or mealtimes, you should consult the health centre.

A normal day with fixed routines and regular mealtimes provides a sense of security and predictability. Encouragement and positive feedback during mealtimes may prevent problems associated with food and eating, and help to instil healthy eating habits to last a lifetime.



More
information

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- **Helsenorge.no** has a great deal of specific advice for parents of infants. Find good advice by searching for key words such as infant, breastfeeding, infant formula, children's meals, dietary recommendations or vegetarian diet. You will also find information here regarding the use of tobacco, alcohol and medicines while you are breastfeeding. Here you can also find specific nutritional advice for women who are pregnant, women who are breastfeeding and infants.
 - **Matportalen.no** provides general advice about safe food and foods to avoid.
 - **Ammehjelpen.no**, the Norwegian Mother-to-Mother Breastfeeding Support Group, provides practical advice and information on breastfeeding to support mothers to breastfeed for as long as they wish to do so. Through Ammehjelpen.no you can find 'breastfeeding buddies' - volunteer mums who provide personal support by telephone or email. You can also get help from ammehjelpsgruppen (breastfeeding support group) on Facebook.
 - **Helsedirektoratet.no** publishes information for health care personnel. Here you can also find information brochures on breastfeeding in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Mirpuri, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish and Urdu (UNICEF and BFHI UK).
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