

Information resources for families

# Breastfeeding a child on treatment for childhood cancer

**Breast milk is the best form of nutrition for your baby. We would like to support you to continue breastfeeding during your baby's treatment. Breast milk has many important nutrients that can help protect your baby from allergies and illnesses such as colds and gastroenteritis. Just as importantly, breastfeeding can provide comfort to you and your baby during treatment.**

Breastfeeding your baby while having treatment may be challenging at times. Your baby will often need to fast or may refuse feeds at times when feeling unwell. They might develop mouth sores making it difficult to attach or they may suffer side effects from the treatment such as vomiting and diarrhoea. Occasionally your child may not tolerate breast milk and may need an additional specialised formula to supplement your breast milk.

We have many resources to assist you in breastfeeding your baby during treatment. During your child's diagnosis, you will meet a dietitian who will assess what support you and your child need to continue breastfeeding throughout treatment. Your child's treating team can help you access Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Lactation Consultants who can provide additional support for breastfeeding your baby on treatment, or a sibling while your child is having treatment.

If you are breastfeeding a sibling of a child undergoing chemotherapy, whenever possible avoid handling chemotherapy. If you do handle chemotherapy drugs, ensure you wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

Our staff can help you to maintain your milk supply by expressing when it is not possible to breastfeed. We can provide equipment and private rooms with comfy chairs for expressing and we can store expressed milk in our Infant Formula Room. In addition, meals are provided for mothers who are breastfeeding or expressing.

Remember, any amount of breast milk is good! Please ask your Dietitian, Doctor or Nurse if you would like additional support to breast feed or express breast milk.

Following are websites which provide information on expressing, storing and transporting expressed breast milk. If you do not have internet access ask your Dietitian or Lactation Consultant to provide you with a copy of the information.

## Resources

Breastfeeding a baby in Hospital  
[www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Breastfeeding\\_a\\_baby\\_in\\_hospital](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Breastfeeding_a_baby_in_hospital)

Breastfeeding at The Royal Children's Hospital  
[www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Breastfeeding\\_at\\_The\\_Royal\\_Children\\_s\\_Hospital](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Breastfeeding_at_The_Royal_Children_s_Hospital)