

Pavee Mothers

# Breastfeeding Information for Traveller Beoirs





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# **Every pregnant woman and new mum has lots of questions about breastfeeding.**

**You might have heard a lot about the good things that breastfeeding can do for baby and mum but not much about how to actually breastfeed. Learning how to breastfeed takes time and practice and most women will need help at some point.**

## **The good news is there are lots of people ready to help!**

**This booklet has been put together by Traveller women for Traveller women. We hope the information will help support you in trying breastfeeding even for a short amount of time.**

**If you have any questions, link in with your local Traveller organisation or Traveller Primary Health Care Project.**

**You can also find more information on [www.paveemothers.ie](http://www.paveemothers.ie) or link in with other supports listed on the last page.**



# 1. Do Travellers breastfeed?



Photo: Derek Speirs

**Yes! Traveller women have always breastfed their babies as it is the best way to bring them on and strengthen them.**

Although only a small number of Travellers are breastfeeding today, it's important to get the number of Traveller women breastfeeding back up.

# 2. How can I get ready for breastfeeding?

**Here are some things you can do to get ready to breastfeed:**

- Talk to your partner, children and others in your home.
- Talk to your Traveller Primary Health Care Worker, doctor, midwife, or Public Health Nurse. Ask them questions during your check-ups.
- Sign-up for the free antenatal classes at your maternity hospital.
- Find a breastfeeding group close to you and go to a session.
- Talk to your midwife or doctor about the Beutler test and how to hand express breast milk.
- Think about doing skin-to-skin right after birth. Speak to your partner about doing it too.



Photo: Derek Speirs

**The HSE asks that all Traveller women hold off on breastfeeding until the baby is tested for Galactosaemia which is very common among Travellers.**

After the baby is born, the midwife or nurse will do a heel prick test, called the **Beutler test**, on the baby and the results will be sent away. It usually takes 1-2 days for the results to come back. While you wait for the test results, your baby will be given a soya-based milk. Your nurse or midwife will teach you how to hand express and store your breast milk for your baby.

Even if you are not sure that you want to breastfeed you can still express the colostrum (see question 5) and have it ready. Colostrum is very important for babies and protects their system. If the test comes back negative, your baby doesn't have the condition. You can feed your baby the colostrum and start to breastfeed.

- Keep them warm and calm
- To control their breathing
- To control their blood sugar and blood pressure
- With bonding



## 4. The Beutler test for Galactosaemia came back positive. What should I do?

**If your baby's test results come back positive for Galactosaemia (see question 3), there is no need to worry.**

It's really important that it is caught early and you and your baby are given the right supports on feeding. Although you won't be able to breastfeed you can continue to give the baby the soya-based milk to make sure they stay healthy. It's also important to continue skin-to-skin with your baby.





## 5. What is colostrum?

**Colostrum is the first milk that your body makes while you are pregnant.**

It is called 'liquid gold' as it protects your baby from many diseases and has everything that your baby needs for growing healthy.



## 6. When does breast milk come in?

**After your baby is born, your body will make breast milk.**

It is lighter in colour and thinner than colostrum. It can take about 3-5 days for this milk to come in.



7.

## When should I breastfeed my baby?

The best thing to do is feed your baby whenever they want and for as long as they want. They may be hungry or just need to be held.

8.

## How do I know when my baby is hungry?

There are things your baby will do to let you know they are hungry:



Stretch



Open their mouth  
and turn their head



Suck their  
fingers or fist



Move to your breast



Get restless



Cry

Watch for early signs that your baby is hungry. You will then be able to breastfeed when you are both calm and relaxed.













# 9.

## How do I know if my baby is getting enough milk?

**If your baby is making lots of wet and dirty nappies, and is gaining weight after the first 2 weeks, it usually means they are getting enough milk.**

Breastfeeding your baby whenever they want will help them get the milk they need. Babies who are breastfed can't be overfed. If you're worried your baby is not getting enough milk, talk to your midwife, doctor, Public Health Nurse or HSE lactation consultant.

### Guidelines for mothers

Your baby's age	1 Week							2 Weeks	3 Weeks
	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days	6 Days	7 Days		
<b>How often should you breastfeed?</b>									
Per day, on average over 24 hours									
									
At least 10-12 feeds per day									
At least 8-10 feeds per day									
<b>Your baby's tummy size</b>									
									
Size of a cherry									
									
Size of a walnut									
									
Size of an apricot									
									
Size of an egg									
<b>Nappies: How many, how wet</b>									
Per day, on average over 24 hours									
									
At least 1-2 wet									
									
At least 3 wet									
									
At least 5 wet									
									
At least 6 heavy wet with pale yellow or clear urine									
<b>Dirty Nappies: Number &amp; colour of stools</b>									
Per day, on average over 24 hours									
									
At least 1-2 black or dark green stools									
									
At least 3 yellow stools									
									
At least 3 large, soft and seedy yellow stools									
Adapted from HSE MyChild.									

Adapted from HSE MyChild.

## 10. What if I don't have enough milk?

**Most women worry that they won't make enough milk for their baby, but usually this isn't a problem. The more you breastfeed, the more milk you will have.**

If you are worried, talk to your midwife, doctor, Public Health Nurse or HSE lactation consultant.

## 11. How should I hold my baby while breastfeeding?

There are different ways to hold your baby while you breastfeed. Choose what is most comfortable for you and your baby. If you are having issues talk to your Public Health Nurse or HSE lactation consultant.



**Cradle**



**Football Hold**



**Laid Back**



**Side Lying**



## 12. Should my baby drink from both breasts at each feed?

**Yes. At each breastfeed, see if your baby wants to feed from both breasts.**

Let your baby feed from one breast for as long as they'd like. Once they are finished with one breast you can take a break, wind them and then offer them the second breast. If they come off on their own, after a good feed, they've probably had enough.



## 13. Do breastfed babies need to be winded?

**Yes.**

You can wind your baby after they are finished with the first breast and before you offer them the second breast.

Wind them again when they are finished feeding.



*Photo: Derek Speirs*

## 14. How long does breastfeeding take?

**Babies can feed for 5 minutes-40 minutes at each feed.**

In the early days babies can feed often but once they come on and get used to it, the quicker they will be. Usually when they are finished they will come off your breast, look sleepy or fall asleep at your breast.

## 15. How long do I need to breastfeed for?

Any amount of breast milk is great for your baby. Every drop counts so you can breastfeed for 1 day or years - it's up to you.

It is recommended that babies only need breast milk for the first 6 months.

## 16. Can I breastfeed if my baby is born early?

**Yes! If your baby is born early or is unwell breast milk is very important.**

In the hospital, you will be encouraged to give your baby breast milk as it will help your baby fight any sickness. It is also easier to digest than baby milk. Your baby may not be able to breastfeed right away but you can express your milk and it will be given to your baby. Your nurse or midwife will help.



# Every breastfeed

**Breastfeeding is really good for Traveller babies:**

Helps the brain

Protects against cot death

Protects against sore stomachs and infections

Lower risk of getting diabetes and asthma

Lower risk of being overweight and obesity

Lower risk of childhood leukaemia and other cancers

Provides comfort





# makes a difference

**Breastfeeding helps  
Traveller mothers too:**

Lower risk of breast cancer  
and ovarian cancer

Lower risk of diabetes

Protects against depression

Helps with losing weight

Helps with bonding

# 17. Does breastfeeding hurt?

**Breastfeeding shouldn't hurt. In the first week of breastfeeding you may feel a bit uncomfortable at the start of the feed. If this is happening, it can help to try a different position or to re-attach your baby.**

Some women may experience:

- full breasts that are hard or painful
- sore or cracked nipples
- breasts that are hot and feel like they are burning
- a small lump in the breast

This is not normal, and you should contact your Public Health Nurse, midwife or doctor right away as the issue can be fixed quickly. Don't wait to see if the pain will go away.



## 18. I started to breastfeed in the hospital but now I am home and my nipples are cracked and sore - what should I do?

**Before you leave the hospital you will be given numbers of midwives or lactation consultants to call if you have any problems. Ring them if you are worried or have any questions.**

You can also talk to your Public Health Nurse who you will see a few days after you come home from the hospital. They can explain how to treat any problems and help you and your baby be more comfortable while breastfeeding.

A breastfeeding support group in your area will also be able to help. You can link in with your local Traveller organisation or Primary Health Care Project for more information.



## 19. I need help but it's the weekend and the services are all closed - what do I do?

**There are breastfeeding groups that support women 7 days a week. You can find a list of these on the last page of this resource.**

If you are worried about your baby, call the out of hours doctor and speak to them. If it is urgent, you can always contact your nearest hospital.





## 20. What does expressing mean?

**Expressing is when you gently squeeze milk out of your breasts. You can express milk with your hand or use a breast pump. The milk can be given to your baby right away or put in the fridge to give later.**

There are lots of reasons why you might want to express your milk:

- To collect breast milk while you wait for the Galactosaemia test results
- You have to be away from your baby
- Someone else is helping with the feeding
- If your breasts feel full and uncomfortable expressing can sometimes help
- To increase your milk supply
- Your baby was born early and not able to breastfeed right away



## 21. Can I breastfeed and also use baby milk?

**Yes. You can breastfeed and use baby milk at the same time, but it's recommended that you wait to give a bottle until breastfeeding is part of your daily routine.**

This usually takes at least four weeks. The longer you are able to only breastfeed, the better it is for your baby.

When you are ready to start using baby milk it's best to begin slowly. This will give your body the time it needs to reduce the amount of milk it produces. Your baby will also need time to get used to bottle-feeding, as it's different to breastfeeding. You can start with one bottle feed a day.

Talk to your Public Health Nurse, midwife or doctor for advice on starting to use baby milk.

You can also express your own milk and feed it to your baby rather than using baby milk.



## 22. Do I need to stop breastfeeding if I get sick or have an infection?

**No!**

It is safe to continue breastfeeding for most common illnesses. Talk to your doctor, Public Health Nurse or midwife who will advise you on your illness.

## 23. Can I breastfeed if I have an ongoing health issue like asthma or diabetes?

**Yes, women with long-term ongoing health issues can breastfeed, including women with asthma or diabetes.**

Breastfeeding has been proven to even help lower the chances of your baby having the same condition later in their life.

## 24. If I breastfeed, can I take medicine?

**Most medicine is fine to take while you are breastfeeding.**

Talk to your chemist, doctor or Public Health Nurse about each medicine you take to check that it is okay.



## 25. Do I need to be on a special diet if I'm breastfeeding?

**No, breastfeeding women don't need to be on a special diet or cut out any foods like in pregnancy.**

You should try to eat healthy foods as much as you can. This will help you get all the things your body needs while you're breastfeeding.

You might find you are hungry more often, which is normal. Eat 1 or 2 extra snacks every day, like a sandwich, yoghurt or fruit. Drink plenty of water.



## 26. Can I drink alcohol if I am breastfeeding?

**Yes, you can drink alcohol if you are breastfeeding, but it's best to drink only a small amount and not very often.**

Try to wait until your baby is at least one month old before you drink alcohol as you and your baby are getting used to breastfeeding.

Just like other things you eat and drink, alcohol can get into your breast milk. To avoid getting alcohol into milk, here are some things you can do:

- Feed your baby before drinking alcohol
- Express your milk before drinking alcohol if you plan to have more than two drinks. You can then give your baby the expressed milk while you wait for the alcohol to clear from your body.
- Wait two hours after each drink before you breastfeed again.





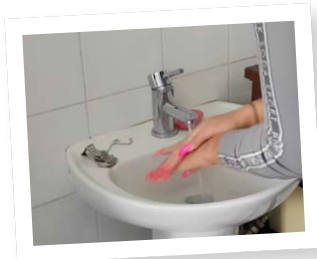
## 27. Do I need to throw out pumped milk if I am drinking?

**No!**

There's no need to dump breast milk if you've had alcohol. If you are expressing your milk, try to do it before you have a drink, that way you can still give it to your baby.

## 28. Can I breastfeed if I'm a smoker?

**If you're finding it hard to stop smoking, still continue to breastfeed as this will protect your baby from infections.**



Your baby will be healthier if you stop smoking before you get pregnant, or as soon as you find out you are expecting. If you are not able to quit smoking while you are pregnant you can still stop after your baby is born. This will protect them from health problems.

If you smoke, try to time your cigarettes so that you are smoking right after you breastfeed. Be sure to smoke outside and away from your baby and ask friends and family to do the same. After smoking, brush your teeth, wash your face and arms and remove your jacket and put it away.

Your doctor or midwife can help you make a plan to quit smoking.



**QUIT**

You can always link in with your Traveller Primary Health Care Project or local Traveller organisation too or use the HSE QUIT services (Freephone 1800 201 203 or freetext QUIT to 50100).

## 29. I'm embarrassed to breastfeed in front of my family. What should I do?

**There is no reason to be embarrassed about breastfeeding. Traveller women have always breastfed their babies with the support of their families.**

Tell your family why you want to breastfeed. They will get used to you breastfeeding and see that your baby is growing strong and that breastfeeding calms them.

If you are worried about family or friends dropping by, you can keep a breastfeeding shawl or blanket close by. You can also have expressed breast milk in the fridge for when you need it.



## 30. What happens if I'm out in public and my baby needs a feed?

**Many women worry about breastfeeding in public but it's good to remember that most people won't even notice you are breastfeeding or are too busy to pay any attention!**

Here are things you can do that might make you more comfortable to breastfeed while away from home:

- Use a shawl or thin blanket over your shoulder.
- Wear a vest top under your t-shirt or jumper so you have easy access when it comes time to feed.
- If you are at a shopping centre or restaurant you can ask if there is a private feeding area.

You can also have a bottle of expressed breast milk ready for your baby.



## 31. How can I talk to my other children about breastfeeding?

**While you are pregnant, talk to your older children about the new baby and let them know you will be breastfeeding.**

This might be new for them, so it's important to tell them why you're breastfeeding and that it's good for the baby. It might help to show them pictures of breastfeeding mothers or use a doll to show how you will feed the new baby.

It's natural for your children to be curious when they see you breastfeeding. Ask them to join you for a cuddle while you breastfeed and answer any questions they have.



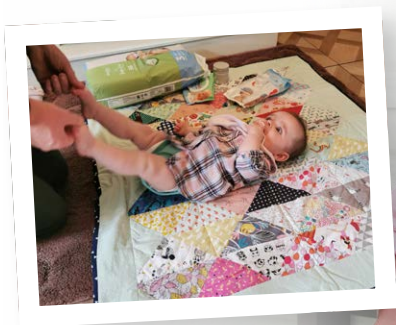


## 32. What can my partner do to help?

**There are lots of things that your partner can do to help:**

- change nappies
- help with bathing
- making sure you have food
- help with the cleaning, cooking and buying groceries
- minding older children and keep them busy
- encouraging and supporting you
- Do skin-to-skin from the time your baby is born. This helps with bonding.

Share this booklet with your partner so he can learn more about breastfeeding. You can also talk to your Traveller Primary Health Care Worker or Public Health Nurse together about breastfeeding.



# *Thank you*

**This resource has been developed by the Eastern Region Traveller Health Unit (THU).**

We would like to acknowledge the work of the Pavée Point Traveller Primary Health Care Project who supported the development of this resource and are committed to making this important information accessible for Traveller women.

Thank you to the HSE National Healthy Childhood Programme and the HSE National Breastfeeding Implementation Group for supporting this resource.

We would also like to thank the Carlow Community Primary Health Care Project, the Donegal Travellers Primary Health Care Project and Friends of Breastfeeding Ireland for their valuable feedback in the development of this resource.

And thank you to the Travellers who gave permission to use their photos in the resource.



## Where to get help with breastfeeding:



### Traveller-Specific Supports

- Pavee Mothers [w: paveemothers.ie](http://www.paveemothers.ie)
- Local Traveller organisation or Primary Health Care Project  
[w: www.paveepoint.ie/traveller-organisations](http://www.paveepoint.ie/traveller-organisations)

### HSE

- Your midwife, Public Health Nurse, or doctor
- Lactation consultant at your maternity hospital or HSE online lactation support  
[w: www2.hse.ie/services/ask-our-breastfeeding-expert](http://www2.hse.ie/services/ask-our-breastfeeding-expert)
- [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie)

### Community Supports

- Cuidú [w: cuidiu.ie](http://www.cuidiu.ie)
- Friends of Breastfeeding [w: friendsofbreastfeeding.ie](http://www.friendsofbreastfeeding.ie)
- La Leche League [w: lalecheleagueireland.com](http://www.lalecheleagueireland.com)



**pavee  
mothers**



**mychild.ie**

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