

## Exercise and breastfeeding

Regular, moderate exercise is good for your health and it helps you to feel good.

- Most women can exercise regularly without any effects on breastfeeding.
- An occasional baby may be fussy at the breast if fed straight after the mother has exercised. This may be due to lactic acid in the milk, which does no harm and will disappear in an hour or two.
- Rarely, a mother may find she needs to cut down on exercise to prevent her milk supply from dropping off.
- Make sure to have plenty of drinks when you are breastfeeding and exercising.
- Healthy eating is important too. Don't go on a strict diet to lose weight while you are breastfeeding.

## Scuba diving and breastfeeding

While there is no firm evidence that scuba diving in itself interferes with breastfeeding, there are the usual risks of scuba diving that you may not want to take while your baby is young. If you become ill yourself from scuba diving and need treatment, it is quite possible that you would lose your milk, or at least the breastfeeding would be disrupted and difficult.

## Tanning lotion and breastfeeding

There are no reports of tanning lotion affecting breastmilk, and it is unlikely that much of the lotion is absorbed into the body. However, as using such tanning lotions is not essential and does not have health benefits, we would recommend caution in their use while breastfeeding.

### For more information contact:

- **Local Community Child Health Nurse**  
They can also refer you to your local Lactation Consultant. See inside your baby's purple 'All About Me' book (page 8), in the phone directory under 'Child Health Centres', or [www.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.health.wa.gov.au)
- **Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline**  
Phone 1800 686 2 686\*  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)
- **Ngala Helpline**  
8:00am–8:00pm seven days a week  
Phone (08) 9368 9368  
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 111 546\*  
[www.ngala.com.au](http://www.ngala.com.au)
- **Local family doctor**

\* Calls made from a mobile phone may be charged at a timed rate.

To order this publication and others, phone 1300 135 030 or visit [www.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.health.wa.gov.au)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please contact [childcommunity@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:childcommunity@health.wa.gov.au)

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Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

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breastfeeding  
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breastfeeding



This topic addresses several questions about breastfeeding that are not covered in the other topics. If you have concerns that are not answered here, ask your doctor, lactation consultant or community child health nurse, as breastfeeding can continue in some quite difficult situations.

Many women wish to, or need to, return to work while still breastfeeding. While this can be difficult to organise, with the support of employers it often can be successfully managed.

## Feeding twins or more

Because breastmilk supply increases with extra demands, most women can breastfeed twins well. This can mean much less work compared to preparing and giving formula.

- Twins can be fed together, but you may prefer to feed them separately while they are very young, either when they wake and demand or one after the other.
- Once feeding is established, it is usually best to feed them at the same time and keep them in much the same routine.
- Each twin may have her own breast, or it may help your supply to alternate them.
- Make sure you eat well to have energy to cope with caring for two babies.
- If you have three or four babies you may like to breastfeed two each time and have someone bottle feed the others – then swap next time.
- However the babies are fed, parents of twins (or more) need plenty of help and support. You may like to contact your local Multiple Birth Association.

## Breastfeeding a premature baby

- Babies who are born some weeks or even months early will need special care in hospital.
- At first they will usually be fed through a tube which goes into the stomach through their mouth or nose.
- Even at this stage breastmilk is the best food for babies, although a 'fortifier' may be added to help them grow. Breastmilk has been shown to have lots of health benefits for premature babies.
- You will need to express your milk and this will be given to your baby. The nursery staff will help you with this.
- You can express by hand or pump – you may like to hire an electric breast pump if you have to express for some weeks.
- When your baby is mature enough you will be able to put him to the breast. Be patient and give your baby time to learn to suck.
- If it is difficult to get your baby to feed, ask the nursery staff, or see the section 'Attachment Problems' in the related topic '**Breastfeeding – when babies won't feed**'.
- It may take some time for him to learn to suck and for your supply to adjust to his demands, so be patient and keep trying. See the related topic '**Breastfeeding – not enough milk**'.

## A new pregnancy while breastfeeding

Although you are unlikely to become pregnant while fully breastfeeding, especially early on, it does sometimes happen.

- You may become aware you are pregnant because your baby becomes fussy at the breast or your nipples become tender.

- There is usually no rush to wean your baby. You can keep feeding as long as you (and the baby) want, unless your doctor says there is a reason not to.
- Most women like to gradually wean around the middle of the new pregnancy. The older baby will be taking other foods by then anyway.
- Some women prefer to keep feeding their older child and the new baby. This is called 'tandem feeding'. This can be done safely if the mother eats well, gets enough rest and makes sure the new baby's needs are met first.

## Working and breastfeeding

There are many ways to work outside the home and keep breastfeeding.

- Use your maternity leave – take as long as you can to recover from the birth and get breastfeeding going well.
- Try to get working hours that will fit around your baby's needs, or work part-time.
- Work-based child care is ideal but it is not often possible.
- You can express milk while you are at work, which can then be fed to your baby (by cup or bottle) by the carer the next day. See the related topic '**Breastfeeding – expressing and storing breastmilk**'.
- If you are not able to express enough breastmilk (and it can be difficult to fit expressing in while caring for your baby, and working in the home and at work) you can breastfeed at home and formula-feed when you are at work.
- An older baby (over six months) may be able to manage with other foods while you are at work.

## Dummies and breastfeeding

- Babies really like to suck and dummies are commonly offered. Parents may find them useful to calm an unhappy baby or help a baby fall off to sleep.
- However, if dummies are given to very young babies before breastfeeding really gets going well, it may be confusing for the baby because of the different kind of sucking needed. Dummies are not usually recommended for breastfed babies for the first few weeks. So, wait a few weeks if you can.
- Using a dummy has been shown to decrease the risk of SIDS, however very few babies die of SIDS under four weeks old. Therefore, it is thought to be safe to delay using a dummy until breastfeeding is well established.
- Also, dummies should not be used when the baby is hungry and really needs to be fed, as this may mean he does not suck so well when he is being fed and the breasts are not stimulated enough to make a good supply of milk. Babies need plenty of sucking time at the breast to keep up the milk supply.
- If you find your baby is using a dummy a lot, discuss this with the community child health nurse as it may be a sign of a feeding problem.

