

INFANT FORMULA FOR NEWBORNS

A way of feeding at risk of being overused, as indicated by the Associazione Culturale Pediatri

The newborn that is born healthy, of an appropriate weight, and at term, should be exclusively breastfed. In the beginning, it will be nourished with colostrum, the first secretion from the breast. Colostrum is a liquid that is rich in protein, carbohydrates, fats and antibodies that protect against viruses and bacteria.

Around the third or fourth day after delivery, the mother will produce mature breast milk. This is sufficient for the newborn and supplementing with formula is not needed. Milk production occurs through a mechanism of supply and demand. The more the child latches onto a nipple and sucks, the more milk is produced. The mammary glands produce milk due to a hormone called prolactin that is produced by the pituitary gland. This allows every mother to produce enough breastmilk for her baby, assuming that there are no interferences. Doctors, obstetricians and nurses should support this natural function in every way possible. There are many reasons why infant formula is given so frequently to newborns, but they are extremely rarely related to the mother's inability to produce milk, or to the health of the mother and child.

Scientific literature is full of studies that demonstrate the great benefits associated with breastfeeding, both for the child's

and mother's health. It has also been demonstrated that if the mother is able to breastfeed her child in its first days of life, then it is highly probable that she will continue for many months.

WHY IT IS BETTER TO NOT SUPPLEMENT

Supplementing breastfeeding of the newborn with infant formula is ill-advised because it interrupts the natural mechanism of supply and demand that exists between mother and child, which regulates breastmilk production.



A baby that has been bottle-fed will, indeed, not need to latch onto the mother's nipple because it is satiated, and the mother will consequently produce less milk. This creates a situation in which the mother, seeing that she is producing less milk, risks losing confidence in her capacity to efficiently nourish her child. This vicious cycle can lead to the mother ending breastfeeding prematurely. And farewell to the benefits.

WHEN IT MAY BE ADVISABLE

A supplement of infant formula can be necessary:

- if the baby's – normal and physiological – weight loss is greater than 10% of its weight as newborn;
- for underweight or premature babies or for those with problems leading to an increased need for energy;
- if the mother is not in condition to breastfeed. It can occur, due to specific and very rare medical reasons, that the mother must avoid giving her breastmilk to her baby for a shorter or longer period of time. In these cases, it is very important to make use of milk banks, present all over Italy. In the meantime, it is important to persist and favour the production of breastmilk, to guarantee that the newborn can receive it as soon as possible.

From the Italian Ministry of Health:

www.salute.gov.it

For more information about milk banks:

www.aiblud.com

Project "Doing more does not mean doing better – Choosing Wisely Italy"

www.slowmedicine.it

www.choosingwiselyitaly.org

FOR FUTURE MOTHERS ADVICE FROM ALTROCONSUMO



➤ During pregnancy, learn more by consulting websites specifically focused on breastfeeding (l11italia.org, mami.org, ibfanitalia.org) or by attending pre-natal courses.

➤ If possible, choose to give birth in one of the 22 Italian health institutions recognized by Unicef as "Ospedali amici dei bambini". You will find a complete list on the website www.unicef.it.

➤ Before giving birth, clearly communicate to your gynaecologist or obstetrician your intention to hold your baby right after childbirth, with skin-to-skin contact, and that you want to breastfeed.

➤ Ask for help in the case of any difficulties. Keep in mind that breastfeeding is the right of every mother and child and that supporting and protecting breastfeeding is a duty for all of society.

➤ Be confident – every mother can produce sufficient milk for her baby.