

Breastfeeding a baby with a congenital heart defect

Breastfeeding offers important benefits for babies with a congenital heart defect (CHD). It is usually possible to breastfeed a baby with a CHD but sometimes can take extra patience and support.

Every baby with a CHD is different. Some may need to be fed more or less often. Some may need a feeding tube or special bottle. Try your best to be open to different feeding schedules and methods. Always follow the advice from your baby's medical provider.

No matter how you feed your baby, it helps you and your baby bond with each other.

Breastfeeding a baby with a CHD

Breast milk is helpful for all babies. It can be extra helpful for babies with a CHD because it can help them fight infections.

What challenges could I face when breastfeeding my baby with a CHD?

- Sometimes breastfeeding a baby with a CHD may not be possible right after birth or in the first few weeks. If your baby needs surgery, you may not be able to breastfeed while they are recovering. During this time, you can pump milk and freeze it to feed them later. It's usually possible to breastfeed once your baby's health is stable.
- Babies with a CHD may get tired more easily or get full more quickly. Talk to a medical provider or lactation consultant for help.
- Babies with a CHD may grow slowly, even though they are being fed enough. Have a medical provider check your baby regularly to make sure their growth is on track.

Medications and breastfeeding

Sometimes, your baby will need to take medication prescribed to them for their CHD. Most babies can still breastfeed while taking medications. Check with your baby's medical provider to make sure.

Professional support

Healthcare providers and lactation consultants can help create a breastfeeding plan specific to your needs and situation. Check in regularly so they can track your baby's progress, offer support, and adjust your breastfeeding plan as needed.



Support and resources

La Leche League

Visit llusa.org to find local breastfeeding support from other parents and families.

American Heart Association

Visit heart.org for resources and to learn more about CHD and other heart conditions.

WIC

Provides nutrition and breastfeeding services for those who are eligible. Visit wic.utah.gov.

MotherToBaby

Ask experts about the safety of medications and other exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Call 866-626-6847 or visit mothertobaby.org.

Maternal Mental Health Referral Network

A list of providers in Utah who are trained in perinatal mental health. maternalmentalhealth.utah.gov.