

Breastfeeding a baby with Down syndrome

Breastfeeding has important benefits for babies with Down syndrome. It is usually possible to breastfeed a baby with Down syndrome, but sometimes it can take extra patience and support.

Every baby with Down syndrome is different. Some may need to be fed more or less often, and some may need supportive devices like a breastfeeding pillow. 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 your baby with Down syndrome

Breast milk is helpful for all babies. It can be extra helpful for babies with Down syndrome because it can help them fight infections and help their lips, tongue, and face muscles get stronger.

What challenges could I face when breastfeeding my baby with Down syndrome?

- Babies with Down syndrome may be more sleepy. You can try talking to your baby and frequently touching them while they eat to keep them from falling asleep before they're full.
- Babies with Down syndrome may have low muscle tone. It's especially important to have good head support while breastfeeding. Support your baby where their head and neck meet (at the base of the skull). Do not put your hand directly behind your baby's head. This can make babies want to push back against your hand and they will come off the breast.

Tips and tricks

Support is key.

Professional help is always available. A healthcare provider or lactation consultant can help you track your baby's growth, create a personalized breastfeeding plan, and find breastfeeding techniques that work for you.

Try supportive devices.

Use breastfeeding pillows, nipple shields, supplemental nursing systems, and special bottles with pumped milk as needed. These tools can be helpful for some babies.



Support and resources

La Leche League

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

National Down Syndrome Society

Visit ndss.org to find resources and learn more about Down syndrome.

WIC

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

Utah Down Syndrome Information and Support

Learn more about Down syndrome and what resources are available in Utah at familyhealth.utah.gov/cshcn/down-syndrome.

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.