

Breastfeeding a baby with a cleft lip or cleft palate

Breastfeeding has important benefits for babies with a cleft lip or cleft palate (CL/P). It is usually possible to feed a baby with a CL/P breast milk but sometimes it can take extra patience and support.

Every baby with a CL/P is different. Some may need to be fed more or less often, and some may need supportive devices like a special bottle with pumped milk. 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 a CL/P

Babies with a CL/P can breastfeed. It's safe and won't hurt them.

Some babies with a cleft lip may find breastfeeding easier than eating from a bottle because the breast's shape can fit around and cover the cleft.

What challenges could I face when breastfeeding my baby with a CL/P?

- Babies with CL/P may get tired quickly when they eat. They may need to eat more often for shorter periods of time.
- Milk can come out of your baby's nose (nasal regurgitation) or enter your baby's airway (aspiration). Use a breastfeeding position that keeps them upright and burp them often to help with this.

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 different positions.

You can try different breastfeeding positions to find ones that work best for your baby to latch and suck milk. A lactation consultant can help you learn different positions.

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.

American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Association

Visit acpacares.org to find resources and learn more about CL/Ps.

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.