



Supporting healthy growth in your preemie

If you're having any trouble with breastfeeding or think your baby's formula should be changed,

While weight gain is very important, keep in mind that weight is not the measure of growth. All babies need to grow in weight, and also in length and head circumference. Preemies need the right balance of nutrients to help promote growth and to help their muscles and organs develop well.

Your baby's feeding plan

When your baby is getting ready to leave the NICU, his doctor or dietitian will work with you to develop a special feeding plan. The plan may include only breastfeeding, breastfeeding and formula feeding together, or formula feeding alone. After leaving the NICU, your baby's pediatrician will continue to monitor the feeding plan, and adjust as needed.

Breastfeeding and Providing Breastmilk

Breastmilk provides many benefits to your premature baby. Breastfeeding is an important time for you and your baby to share, and can help the two of you bond.

Unless your baby has a special medical situation, his doctor will likely encourage you to breastfeed and provide breastmilk. However, depending on your baby's age weight, and how much he's eating, breastmilk may not provide enough nutrition alone. In this case, your baby's feeding plan may include a combination of the following:

- Some breastfeeding sessions
- Pumped breastmilk that has been fortified with a special formula
- Pumped breastmilk without fortification
- Some feeding sessions of a specialized premature infant formula

Supplementation of your breastmilk may continue for a few weeks to months after your preemie goes home, depending on his growth rate. As soon as your baby's doctor feels his growth is on track, he'll likely advise you to breastfeed exclusively until complementary foods are added to the diet as long as you aren't having any trouble with breastfeeding.

Formula Feeding

Your baby's doctor will advise you on the best feeding plan to follow at home and what formula to feed.

All infants grow differently, so your baby's growth will be monitored closely by his doctor and the feeding plan adjusted accordingly. If you think your baby's formula should be changed discuss it with his doctor.