



# Baby Milk

A SIMPLE GUIDE

# Milk

According to NHS guidelines, breast milk, or infant formula milk should be your baby's main drink during the first year of life.

## Breast milk

The World Health Organisation recommends exclusively breastfeeding for the first 6 months of your baby's life.

## Health advantages of breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding *meets all baby's nutrition* and hydration needs.
- The composition of breast milk *adapts* to your baby's changing nutritional requirements.
- Breastmilk helps *protect against infection* and to build a strong and *healthy immune system*
- Breastfeeding *reduces* your (the mother's) risk of breast and ovarian *cancer*
- Once settled and established breastfeeding can be a *convenient* way for you to feed your baby wherever and whenever required.

## Infant formula milk

Infant formula is the *only suitable substitute* to breastmilk and contains all the essential nutrients your baby needs. However, it *does not have the same health benefits* as breast milk for you and your baby. For example, it cannot protect your baby from infections, nor can it reduce your risk of breast and ovarian cancer

Like breast milk, formula milk should be given exclusively to babies in their first 6 months of life.

Formula milk comes in 2 different forms: a dry powder you make up with water, or a ready-to-feed liquid formula. While a ready-to-feed liquid formula can be convenient, it tends to be more expensive and, once opened, needs to be used more quickly.

# Milk

## Vegan formula milk

Currently, there are no vegan infant formulas suitable for babies in the UK right now. It is vital to speak to a health professional if you wish to raise your child vegan and cannot or choose not to breastfeed.

SMA sell a soy-based infant formula however there is very little evidence to suggest that this is a safe alternative to breastmilk for babies under 1 year old. Therefore before 1 year, soy-based infant formula should be avoided as a precaution.

## Breast Milk

The WHO recommends exclusively breastfeeding from birth - 6 months and to continue alongside solid foods up to 2 years and beyond

### Benefits

Easily available, digested and absorbed. Contains all of the nutrition and hydration your baby needs & helps to build a strong immune system.

## Formula

The only suitable alternative to breast milk. Provides all baby's nutrition & hydration but extra water may be needed in hot weather.

"Follow-on" is not necessary after 6-months and provides not additional benefit to regular infant formula - continue with usual formula up to 12 months

## Cow's Milk

Not to be used as a main drink until 12 months.

Can be used in cooking / solids from 6-months

Has nutritional benefits - good source of calcium and iodine.

## Soya Milk

Alternative milks can be introduced from 12-months as part of a healthy, balanced diet and can be included in cooking from 6-months

Do not use as a main drink before 12 months unless advised by a GP. Ensure the brand used is fortified with calcium & iodine

Rice milk is not recommended due to levels of arsenic

# How Much Milk?

## 0-6 months

As a rough guide, a newborn baby needs around 8-12 feeds in 24 hours. Babies are very good at regulating their appetite, and this regulation is well established by 6 weeks. However, some babies might need encouragement to wake and feed during the night in the early days. Ask your health visitor (HV) about your baby's milk intake if you feel unsure.

## Responsive feeding

Responsive feeding is about understanding when your baby is hungry or full (whether breast or formula fed) and responding. When your baby is hungry you'll notice cues such as:

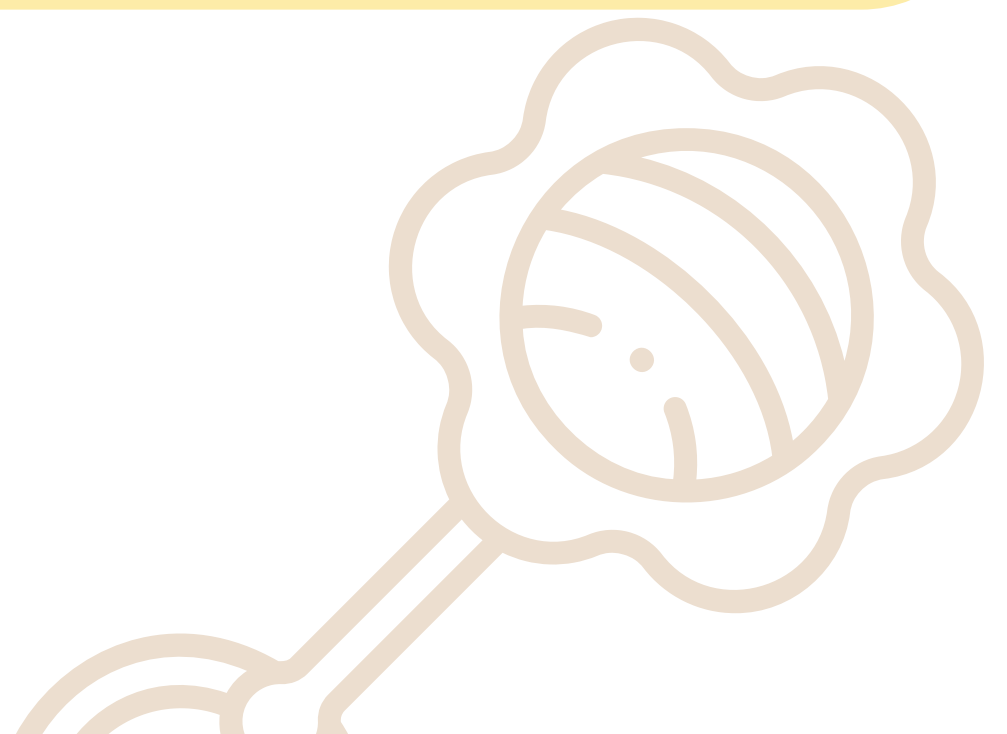
- mouth opening
- turning their head
- lip smacking
- looking for nipple
- hands in mouth

This approach moves away from the idea of prescribed routines such as counting the time spent feeding or the amount of milk consumed. Just like adults babies have some days where they will drink more or less than others.

## Responsive Feeding Encourages

- an enjoyable bonding experience
- being engaged with feeding your baby intuitively
- responding to your baby's communication which promotes healthy brain development

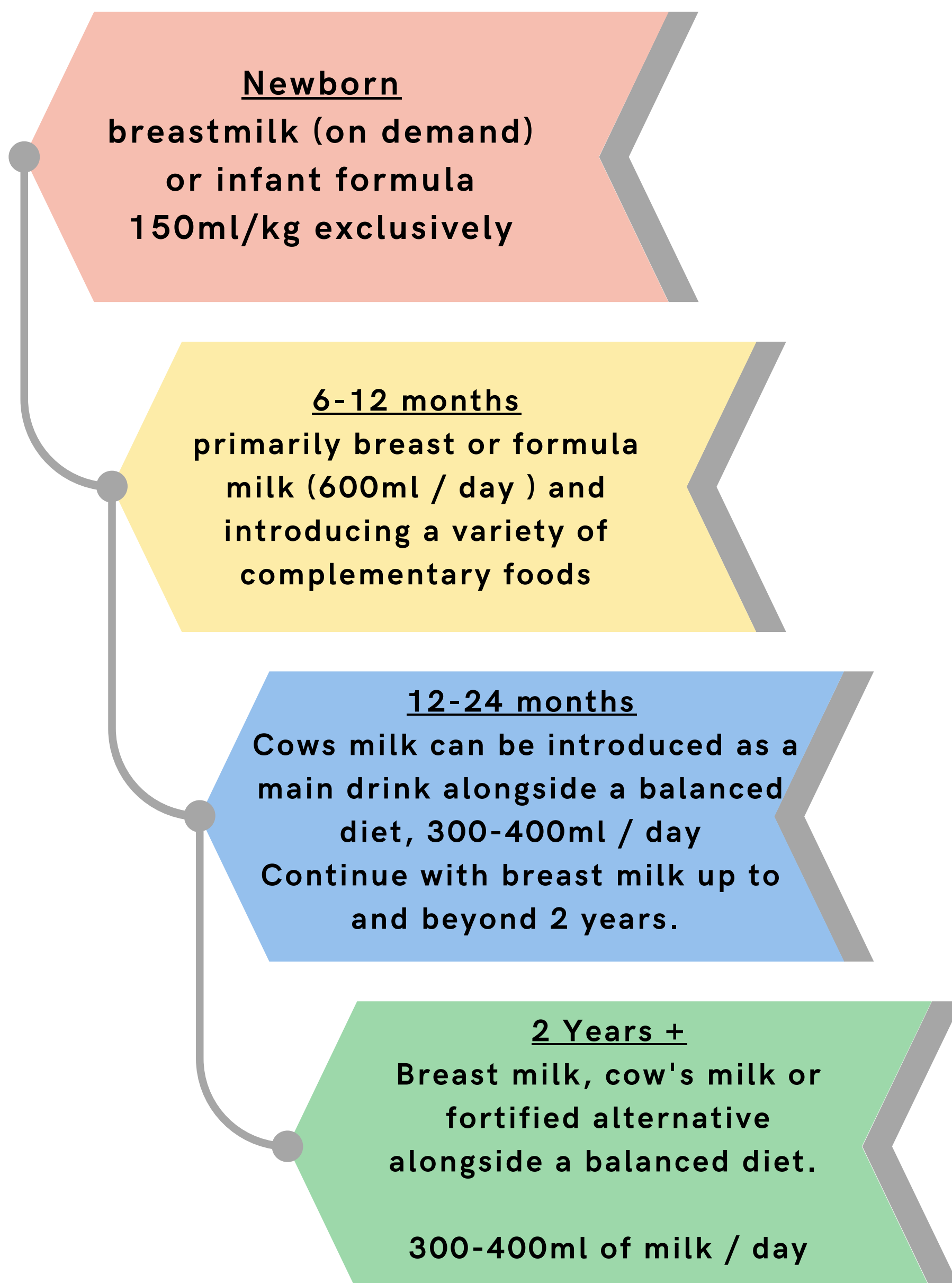
It's also thought to reduce the risk of under or overfeeding and it supports babies in naturally regulating their appetite.



Signs baby is feeding effectively:

- You can see and hear baby swallowing.
- Sucks are slow, deep and rhythmic rather than fast and fluttery.
- When feeding, their cheeks are full and their jaw drops lower into their chin.
- They give cues when they are full.
- After around 7 days old, baby should have at least 6 heavy wet nappies in 24 hours.
- Baby should steadily follow their growth chart centile.

# What Milk When?





# Milk and Weaning

## 6-12 months

At approximately 6 months, you can begin introducing solid foods to your baby. When food is first introduced it should be in small quantities, and it's recommended to give your baby the same amount of milk as before weaning. At this early stage your baby is mainly developing the skills they need for eating, and breast/formula milk is still their main source of nutrition. At around 10-12 months and as your baby starts to eat more, the amount of milk they want and need will gradually start to decrease.

Breastfed babies should naturally adapt their milk intake based on how much solid food they've eaten that day. According to NHS guidelines, formula-fed babies may require 600ml per day between 7-9 months, decreasing to 400ml between 10-12 months.

But do keep in mind that this is a guide and babies like adults have individual needs.

## Follow on Milk

"follow-on" formula milks can be purchased for infants after 6 months. Follow on milks are safe to use, but they are expensive and there is no research to suggest any benefit to them over baby's regular formula milk.

## Cows' milk

Whole cow's milk or other plant milk alternatives can be mixed in with your baby's solid foods after 6 months. But it shouldn't be offered as a main drink to replace either breast or formula milk until 12 months.

This is because it is difficult to digest and can damage your baby developing intestines as well as increasing their risk for cow's milk allergy



# Milk and Weaning

## 7-9 months

Your baby will gradually move towards eating 3 meals a day, and NHS guidelines state formula-fed infants can continue to have around 4 feeds a day from 7-9 months. These milk feeds can be upon waking, after lunch, after an evening meal and before bed. Breastfed babies can be fed responsively around solid foods.

If you're finding as weaning progresses that your baby doesn't have much appetite for solids you can try moving the milk feeds further away from meal time to see if it helps. Some infants need at least an hour's gap between the two. Also, keep an eye on how much a formula-fed baby is having as they may fill up on milk in place of solids (see how much milk section).

Always remember that all babies are different. Some will take to weaning quickly, and may reduce their milk feeds earlier on. Other babies are slower to take to weaning, and will explore foods at a gradual pace, and it may take them a while to move to 3 meals a day.

Both scenarios are completely normal - follow your baby's lead. It is recommended to get their weight checked regularly by your HV.

## Can my toddler have plant/vegan milk?

NHS guidelines state that from the age of 12 months, you can give your little one unsweetened calcium-fortified milk alternatives such as soya, almond and oat milk as a drink as part of a healthy balanced diet. However, professional bodies agree that these milk should not be offered as a main drink until your child is 2 years old (but do check and discuss with a healthcare professional as it is likely to vary depending on your child's diet).

Note: fortified, unsweetened plant milk can be added to baby's foods during weaning from 6 months. However, milk alternatives don't contain the same levels of nutrients and energy as cows' milk.

### 10-12 months +

From around 10-12 months your baby will eat larger, more regular meals and they will now get most of their nutrition from food, rather than milk. You can continue to breastfeed alongside solid meals and The WHO recommends breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond. Your baby will be less dependent on breast milk for nutrition at this stage, however, they will continue to receive additional nutrition, health advantages and comfort for as long as they breastfeed.

After 12 months, it's no longer necessary to feed your child formula milk, and whole cow's milk can be given as a main drink. Between the ages of 1-3, it is recommended that children consume around 350-400mls of milk or, alternatively 3 servings of dairy foods per day.

note: you may need to offer less milk if your child is consuming a lot of dairy at snack or mealtimes

### Dairy Portion Sizes

1 beaker (100ml) of milk  
(dairy or fortified alternative)

1 pot (125ml) of yoghurt  
(dairy or fortified alternative)

20g cheese

