

Breast Milk Fortifier

Information for
parents and carers



What is breast milk fortifier?

Breast milk fortifier is a nutritional supplement that can be added to your expressed breast milk. It comes as a powder, which is dissolved into your breast milk. It contains extra calories, protein and some essential vitamins, which help to promote growth and bone development during the first few weeks of life.

Why does my baby need breast milk fortifier?

Babies that are born early or have a low birth weight may not have had time to build up their natural stores of important proteins and vitamins.

Your breast milk is the best source of nutrition for your baby. It contains many of the calories, protein and essential vitamins essential for their growth and development. Your body is really clever and can tailor your milk to your baby's needs. However, your body doesn't know that your baby has arrived early and that they may need some additional nutrients to help support them to grow and develop at this time. For this reason, babies who are born before 34 weeks gestation, weigh less than 1,500g and receive breast milk are usually given breast milk fortifier.

Breast milk fortifier will help make sure your baby receives enough nutrients for growth and bone health.

How is it given to my baby?

Breast milk fortifier will be prescribed by a doctor. To start with, a small amount will be measured and mixed with your breast milk, before being given to your baby. If your baby has no negative reaction to the breast milk fortifier for at least 24 hours, the amount will gradually be increased to the full dose over the following few days.

When your baby is getting ready to go home and is having more breast feeds, we will give the breast milk fortifier in a different way. It will be mixed with a smaller amount of breast milk (5 to 10mls) and given to your baby from a bottle teat, before they have a breast feed; this is called a fortifier boost.

We give the fortifier boost in a very small amount of breast milk through a teat so that it doesn't interfere with breastfeeding.

Your doctor will tell you how many fortifier boosts your baby will need each day. This dose will be monitored and adjusted according to your baby's needs.

Are there any side effects?

Breast milk fortifier has been used to support the growth and development of preterm or low birth weight babies for more than 20 years. It is made from a hydrolysed (broken down) cow's milk protein.

It is possible that your baby could be sensitive to the cow's milk protein, which is why the supplement is introduced in small amounts. The dose is then increased in increments until the desired dose is achieved.

How long will my baby be on breast milk fortifier for?

Babies who are started on breast milk fortifier will usually need to continue having it until they are 4 to 8 weeks past their due date.

It should not be used if your baby receives over half of their feeds as formula milk, as this already has enough nutrients in it. It should only be added to breast milk.

Can my baby come home whilst still having breast milk fortifier?

If your baby is still receiving breast milk fortifier when they are ready to be discharged home, you will receive a supply from the Neonatal Unit / your GP. You will be taught how to make and give the breast milk fortifier as your baby gets ready for being discharged.

Your baby will be followed up once they are home, either by your GP or the Neonatal Discharge and Outreach Team Service.

Your baby will be weighed regularly. If they are gaining more than 250g a week the decision may be made to stop the fortifier or two consecutive weeks.

If you have any questions or queries, please speak to the nurse or doctor looking after your baby. They will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you would like support or advice about expressing or breast feeding, please ask to see someone from the Neonatal Feeding Team in the Neonatal Unit.



Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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