

Help! My baby is refusing breastfeeds

Sometimes babies can refuse to take a breastfeed. This can be quite sudden. It can happen at any age. Nearly always it is temporary and although it is extremely upsetting, if you keep your breastmilk supply up with expressing, breast refusal can be overcome.

See www.abm.me.uk/website/Topic%20based.htm for an article on reasons why babies might refuse the breast.

Some things that might help:

For very young babies - instead of offering your breast for a couple of days, offer him breastmilk another way (eg cup feeding)

Sometime around each feed time (before or after, whenever you have time) express your breastmilk so that you keep up with his feeding pattern

Lie him skin to skin with you when he's got a full tummy so that he associates lying at your breast with food

Darken the room and keep it quiet

Restart breastfeeding when you both feel ready

This can also work for older babies although some mothers continue to offer their breast gently then move on to giving their breastmilk another way if their baby refuses.

How do I offer breastfeeding gently?

When you and your baby are ready, choose where you want to be and who you want to be with. Some mothers want to be alone at home; some will come to a GBSN group and ask a peer supporter to sit with them.

We suggest that you have some expressed breastmilk in the baby's cup to one side so that if either of you feel upset, you can offer the feed to your baby and take time to relax.

The gentlest way is to either co-bathe with your baby or just snuggle up.

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Snuggling up

All that you do here is to make yourself comfortable on your favourite chair or sofa, possibly lying back a little, using pillows or cushions where you need them. Then lie your baby down your front with his head between your breasts. Try to do this when your baby is asleep then he'll start to wake, make the feeding cues and he can move himself to your breast. Because he'll be using his instincts, he'll take a big wide open mouthful of breast and latch on deeply. Because you are lying slightly back, gravity is on his side and you don't need to worry about how to hold him.

See www.biologicalnurturing.com and
www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/bla.html
for pictures.

Co-bathing

This also enables your baby to latch himself onto your breast as snuggling up does. The difference here is that you get into a warm bath. The water needs to be below the level of your breasts. Have a bit of time to yourself and when you are ready, ask your partner to help you lie your baby on your front. Lie your baby with his head between your breasts. Then just wait and see what happens. Many babies will start to root around and make crawling movements just as when they snuggle into you. Caution here - you need another person with you for safety - to pass the baby into you and for you to pass your baby to them before you get out.