

# Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding Your Toddler

Human milk is an important part of your growing toddler's diet, even after they've started solid foods. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding also offers comfort and builds attachment, which helps your toddler grow into a more confident child.

### It's Important for Your Toddler

Human milk:

- ✓ is a natural and nutritious food for your toddler
- ✓ is all the food your child needs for the first 6 months, and continues to be important for 2 years or more
- ✓ supports your toddler's immune system
- ✓ protects your toddler from some infections
- ✓ supports your toddler's healthy growth

### It's Important for You

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding:

- ✓ may lower your risk of diseases like breast and ovarian cancers
- ✓ is convenient
- ✓ helps you bond with your toddler



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Toddlers who breastfeed or chestfeed don't need cow's milk or other animal milk. But until they're at least one year old, they need a liquid vitamin D supplement of 400 IU every day. Talk with your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you have questions.

### Can I Breastfeed or Chestfeed my Toddler if...?

#### ...I return to work or school

Yes. Try breastfeeding or chestfeeding before you leave and when you return home. Your toddler may want to feed more in the evening or at night to make up for the time away. You can also express your milk at work or school and have your caregiver give it to your toddler the next day. Make a plan for when and where you'll pump and where you can clean your pump and store your milk. B.C. employers must, by law, make it possible for you to do so.

#### ...I take prescribed medication

Most medications are safe to take while breastfeeding or chestfeeding, but talk with your health care provider, public health nurse or pharmacist, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to be sure.

#### ...we're in public

In Canada, there are laws that protect your right to breastfeed or chestfeed anywhere, at any time. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding in public is a normal, healthy and legal activity, and it's illegal for anyone to ask you to stop or cover up.

#### ...I'm pregnant

Yes. Talk with your health care provider to help ensure you're getting enough nutrition for your unborn child, your breastfeeding or chestfeeding toddler and yourself. Take a prenatal supplement. And don't worry if your milk looks a bit different and your supply decreases around your fourth or fifth month.

This is due to the normal hormonal changes of pregnancy. Some toddlers will naturally wean at this point, but may want to breastfeed or chestfeed again once the baby is born and more milk is flowing.



#### TRY THIS

If you're pregnant, get some extra rest by lying down while you breastfeed or chestfeed your toddler.

#### ...I breastfeed or chestfeed my new baby

Yes. You can "tandem nurse" (breastfeed or chestfeed a new baby as well as your toddler), and your body will adjust to make enough milk for both. This can also be a good way to connect with both children. You can feed them at the same time or separately. In the first few days after giving birth, feed your newborn first to make sure they get lots of practice and all the nutrition and antibodies in your colostrum.

#### ...my child bites or is teething

Yes. If your toddler bites, remove them from your breast or chest and firmly tell them that biting hurts you. Then try again. You may have to repeat this message a few times before the biting stops. Biting may mean that they're teething (see [Looking After Your Toddler's Teeth](#)), sick or finished feeding. They can't bite if they're properly latched and sucking, so remove them from the breast or chest as soon as they're done. To do so, watch for long pauses between sucking. Then break the latch by inserting your index finger into their mouth.

### ...I smoke and/or vape tobacco

It's best for you and your child if you stop smoking. But breastfeeding or chestfeeding is still important for your child's health, and many nursing parents who smoke breastfeed or chestfeed successfully. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding may even help protect your baby from some of the negative effects of being exposed to tobacco smoke.

If you smoke, though, you expose your child to second-hand smoke and to the nicotine and other harmful substances that pass through your milk. Smoking can also reduce the amount of milk you produce and lead to earlier weaning. Quitting or cutting down is healthy for you and your toddler. If you can't quit, reduce your child's exposure by breastfeeding or chestfeeding before you smoke, keeping your car and home smoke-free, and washing your hands and changing your clothes after smoking. For information on how to quit or reduce the amount you smoke:

- Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about the BC Smoking Cessation Program, which provides free and low-cost nicotine replacement products and medications to help you quit.
- Try to quit. Contact Quit Now at [quitnow.ca](http://quitnow.ca) or 1-877-455-2233 (toll-free).
- Talk Tobacco: Indigenous quit smoking and vaping support. [smokershelpline.ca/talktobacco/home](http://smokershelpline.ca/talktobacco/home) or 1-833-998-8255 (TALK).
- First Nations Health Authority Resources:
  - FNHA Quitting Commercial Tobacco [fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Quitting-Commercial-Tobacco-FAQs.pdf](http://fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Quitting-Commercial-Tobacco-FAQs.pdf)
  - FNHA Respecting Tobacco [fnha.ca/respectingtobacco](http://fnha.ca/respectingtobacco)

### ...I drink alcohol

The safest choice is not to drink alcohol while breastfeeding, chestfeeding or expressing milk. It takes about 2 hours for alcohol from 1 standard drink to leave the body and the human milk. Having a standard drink (see next page for what a standard drink looks like) once in a while may be okay, as long as it's planned. By planning ahead, you can lower your risks and risks to your toddler:

- stick to one standard drink
- breastfeed or chestfeed (or pump and store your milk) before having a drink
- wait 2 to 3 hours per drink before breastfeeding, chestfeeding or expressing milk again
- throw away any milk you express within 2 to 3 hours of drinking

See [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) for more information.



#### BE AWARE

It takes time for your body to get rid of the alcohol in your milk. And pumping, drinking a lot of water, resting, or drinking coffee doesn't make it happen any faster. Any milk that you pump while drinking or in the 2 to 3 hours after drinking should be thrown away.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Whether smoked, vaped, applied to the skin, or ingested (as edibles, drinks, oils or pills), no amount of cannabis is known to be safe if you breastfeed or chestfeed.

### ...I use cannabis (marijuana)

The safest option is to not use cannabis while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. The tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in cannabis is stored in human milk and can be passed on to your child. And because the THC remains for so long in the body, expressing and discarding or throwing your milk away ("pumping and dumping") doesn't make it safe for your child, either. Even cannabidiol (CBD) hasn't been proven safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. Cannabis can also make you drowsy and unable to respond to your toddler's needs.

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding has many health benefits for both the toddler and the parent. If you're finding it difficult to stop using cannabis, discuss with your health care provider about steps you can take to help protect you and your toddler.



#### KEY TAKEAWAY

If you have more than 1 standard alcoholic drink per day, smoke, use cannabis or take non-prescription opioids and stimulants, talk with a trusted health care provider, public health nurse or pharmacist, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. They can help you make the best feeding decision for your child.



#### KEY TAKEAWAY

To protect your child, avoid exposing them to smoke from cannabis, vaping, e-cigarettes and cigarettes, both during pregnancy and after birth.

## ...I use non-prescription opioids and stimulants

Non-prescription opioids and stimulants can pass through your milk and affect your toddler. If you use non-prescription opioids and stimulants and would like support and information about how to safely breastfeed or chestfeed your toddler, talk with a trusted health care provider.

## Finding Help

To get the support you need to help you breastfeed or chestfeed your toddler with confidence, look to:

- your health care provider
- other parents who have breastfed or chestfed toddlers
- breastfeeding or chestfeeding support groups (see [Resources](#))
- a public health nurse
- a lactation consultant ([bclca.ca](http://bclca.ca))
- HealthLink BC (call 8-1-1)
- hospital breastfeeding or chestfeeding clinics
- La Leche League ([lllc.ca](http://lllc.ca))
- the Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding section in *Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care*



### DANGER

Ensure all alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, medications and non-prescription opioids and stimulants are kept out of your toddler's reach.

# Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health

Guidance to support people in Canada to make informed decisions about alcohol and consider reducing their alcohol use

**A standard drink means:**

<b>Beer</b> 341 ml (12 oz) of beer 5% alcohol	or	<b>Cooler, cider, ready-to-drink</b> 341 ml (12 oz) of drinks 5% alcohol	or	<b>Wine</b> 142 ml (5 oz) of wine 12% alcohol	or	<b>Spirits</b> (whisky, vodka, gin, etc.) 43 ml (1.5 oz) of spirits 40% alcohol
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**To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol, it is recommended that people living in Canada consider reducing their alcohol use.**

**Alcohol Consumption Per Week**

<p><b>0 drinks per week</b> Not drinking has benefits, such as better health and better sleep.</p>	<p>No risk</p>	<p>0 </p>
<p><b>1 to 2 standard drinks per week</b> You will likely avoid alcohol-related consequences for yourself and others.</p>	<p>Low risk</p>	<p>1  2 </p>
<p><b>3 to 6 standard drinks per week</b> Your risk of developing several different types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer, increases.</p>	<p>Moderate risk</p>	<p>3  4  5  6 </p>
<p><b>7 or more standard drinks per week</b> Your risk of heart disease or stroke increases. <b>Each additional standard drink</b> Radically increases the risk of these alcohol-related consequences.</p>	<p>Increasingly high risk</p>	<p>7  8  +  ++</p>

**Alcohol Consumption Per Day**

If you are going to drink, don't exceed 2 drinks on any day.

Drinking less benefits you and others. It reduces your risk of injury and violence, and many health problems that can shorten life.

**Pregnant, Trying to Get Pregnant or Breastfeeding**

During pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant, there is no known safe amount of alcohol use.

When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest.

**Sex and Gender**

Health risks increase more quickly at 7 or more standard drinks per week for females.

Overall, far more injuries, violence and deaths result from men's drinking.

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction  
Evidence, Engagement, Impact.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction was commissioned by Health Canada to produce Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health. This document is a summary for the public of the new guidance. For more information, please visit [www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca).

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