



Breastfeeding Committee For  
Saskatchewan

# Breastfeeding

## Finger-Feeding Your Baby with an Oral Syringe

This method of feeding should be used only **after** instruction by a qualified caregiver.

### IMPORTANT

- Finger-feeding with an oral syringe is only a **temporary** way to feed your baby.

*The first milk choice is your own expressed breast milk. If artificial baby milk (formula) is used discuss the possible health risks with your health care provider.*

For further information contact:

*Local Public Health Nurse*

*Lactation Consultant*

*Local Health Care  
Provider*

*Local breastfeeding support  
group*

### An oral syringe is used:

- as a method of feeding when a mother is not able to breastfeed her baby.
- to teach baby a better tongue position used for breastfeeding.

### Getting Ready

- Make sure your fingernails are short and clean, especially on the finger you will use to finger-feed.
- Wash your hands.
- Gather the supplies:
  - expressed breast milk or formula warmed to room temperature
  - oral syringe (periodontal or medicine-tipped)
  - bowl with clean warm soapy water
- Place the supplies on a clean cloth.

### Filling the Syringe

- Hold the tip of the syringe in the milk.
- Pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with milk.
- With a periodontal syringe, a 3/4 filled syringe contains 10 mL of milk (1/3 ounce). 3 full syringes equals 30 mL (1 ounce). Most medicine-tipped oral syringes are 10 mls, but other types and sizes are available.
- Remove any air from the syringe by:
  - Point the tip of the syringe upwards.
  - Pull back on the plunger to draw milk from the tip.
  - Push the plunger upwards until the air is pushed out and milk fills to the end of the tip of the syringe.



***HealthLine***  
**1-877-800-0002**

## Feeding Your Baby

- Hold your baby in your arms, upright, in a semi-sitting position on your lap, or in an infant chair.
- Use a finger closest to the size of the mother's nipple.
- Touch baby's lip with your finger to encourage baby to open mouth wide like a yawn.
- Slide your finger into baby's mouth, resting the nail bed on baby's tongue. The pad of your finger should rest where the hard and soft palate join on the roof of the mouth, about 4 cm (1 1/2") into baby's mouth. Gently massage the roof of baby's mouth to start baby sucking. You may also try gently tickling the baby's feet/hands .
- After baby sucks 3 to 4 times, slide the (curved) tip of the syringe along the side of your finger into the corner of baby's mouth about 3 mm (1/8").
- Press the plunger slowly when baby sucks. **When baby stops sucking, stop pressing.**
- **Do not** press the plunger faster than baby can easily suck and swallow.
- **Do not** press hard if the syringe sticks. It may force in too much milk and your baby may choke.
- Burp the baby after each syringe of milk.
- Record the time baby was fed and the amount taken.

## Cleaning the Syringe

### In the Hospital:

- Use a clean syringe for each feeding.

### At Home:

- Take the syringe apart.
- Wash (**do not boil**) each part with hot, soapy water (mild liquid hand soap)
- Rinse well.
- Place on a clean dry cloth and allow to air dry.
- Store syringe in a clean container.
- Keep syringe out of reach of small children.

### IMPORTANT:

- The periodontal syringe has a sharp tip that may injure- use gently.
- If the syringe sticks **do not** press hard.
- **Do not** press the plunger if baby is not sucking.

**Stay in touch with your appropriate health care provider if you are finger-feeding with an oral syringe.**