

10.1.1 Supporting breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is most important for the protection of infants from illness and for their recovery from illness. It provides the nutrients needed for a return to good health.

- Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended from birth until 6 months of age.
- Continued breastfeeding, together with adequate complementary foods, is recommended from 6 months up to 2 years of age or older.

Health workers treating sick young children have a responsibility to encourage mothers to breastfeed and to help them overcome any difficulties.

Assessing a breastfeed

Take a breastfeeding history by asking about the baby's feeding and behaviour. Observe the mother while breastfeeding to decide whether she needs help. Observe:

- How the baby is attached to the breast (see page 263).

Signs of good attachment are:

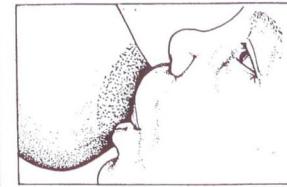
- more areola visible above baby's mouth
 - mouth wide open
 - lower lip turned out
 - baby's chin touching the breast.
- How the mother holds her baby (see page 263).
 - baby should be held close to the mother
 - baby should face the breast
 - baby's body should be in a straight line with the head
 - baby's whole body should be supported.
 - How the mother holds her breast.

Overcoming difficulties

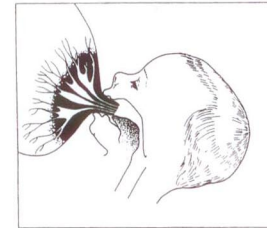
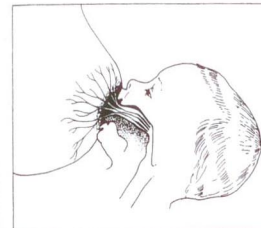
1. 'Not enough milk'

Almost all mothers can produce enough breast milk for one or even two babies. However, sometimes the baby is not getting enough breast milk. The signs are:

- poor weight gain (<500 g a month, or <125 g a week, or less than the birth weight after 2 weeks)



Good (left) and poor (right) attachment of infant to the mother's breast



Good (left) and poor (right) attachment—cross-sectional view of the breast and baby



Good (left) and poor (right) positioning of infant for breastfeeding