

2. Breastfeeding Low Birth Weight/Pre-Term babies

Advantages of breast milk for LBW and pre-term Babies

- Has the right nutrients for the pre-term/LBW baby
- Pre-term babies need more protein and a mother who has delivered pre-term has more breast milk.
- Is easily digestible.
- Contains factors to fight infection (small babies are more vulnerable to disease).
- Breastfeeding keeps the baby close to the mother and therefore, warm. This protects the pre-term baby from cold (Hypothermia), which can lead to infection.

Key Messages

For small babies who can suckle

- Try the underarm hold for more support or the alternate underarm hold.
- If sleeping, wake baby every 2-3 hours for breastfeeding by rubbing a damp cloth over its face.

For babies who are not able to suckle:

- Babies less than 1500 gm may not be able to breastfeed in the beginning.
- Express milk by applying gentle pressure over entire breast and collect milk in a clean bowl.
- Express milk every 2-3 hours to keep the milk supply up.
- Put baby to breast and allow her to lick the nipple, and try to suckle.
- Once the baby is able to suckle, she should be put to the breast as often as possible to stimulate milk production.
- Continue feeding with the spoon as well until the baby is getting its milk requirements directly from the breast.



How much to give?

- For a LBW baby: For first day 60 ml/kg body weight.
- Add 20 ml/kg body weight until baby is taking 200 ml per day.
- Divide the total into 8-12 feeds (every 2-3 hours).
- Colostrum can be kept for up to 12 hours at room temperature.
- Mature milk (after first 72 hours) can be kept for 6-8 hours at room temperature.
- Continue until baby can be fully breastfed.