

Breastfeeding Policy

Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants as it contains essential nutrients, protects them from illness, and provides many other long-term health benefits for both mother and infant. Exclusive breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition and is sufficient to support optimal growth and development for the first 6 months of life¹. Introduction of solid foods from around 6 months of age should complement the breastmilk diet¹. Continued breastfeeding is recommended throughout the first year and beyond as long as mutually desired by mother and infant². Any breastfeeding is considered beneficial for the infant and mother².

While Australia's breastfeeding initiation rate is 96%², only a small proportion of women achieve the goal of exclusively breastfeeding to around 6 months². Exclusive breastfeeding means that the infant only receives breastmilk without any additional food or drink¹.

Mothers are encouraged to continue breastfeeding if they return to work. The early childhood education and care environment is a key setting for the promotion and support of breastfeeding. The role of educators to support breastfeeding is important to further increase Australia's breastfeeding duration rates.

It is important to follow correct procedures to ensure safe food handling and hygiene when using expressed breastmilk. Where infants are not breastfed or are partially breastfed, a commercial infant formula should be used as an alternative to breastmilk until 12 months of age.

Service Commitment

Building Futures encourage and support all families to continue breastfeeding their infant until at least 12 months of age, in line with current recommendations.

Our service recognises that families have the right to decide whether they will breastfeed their infant while they are in care, and each family's decision will be accepted and respected.

Our service will provide a supportive environment by feeding infants expressed breastmilk supplied by their families and by providing suitable spaces and resources to mothers breastfeeding their infants at the service.

Date Reviewed: 16/08/2023

Date to be Reviewed: 2/01/2024

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood*, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra

² NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council), 2013, *Infant Feeding Guidelines*, National Health and Medical Research Council, Canberra