



Information Sheets for Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Staff

**How to support breastfeeding
when children are in child care**

Information Sheets on Breastfeeding Topics

These information sheets are part of the *Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Service Kit* produced by Mouvement allaitement du Québec (MAQ). They are designed to raise the awareness of early childhood educators and child care staff about various topics related to breastfeeding in child care settings. Please feel free to use them when and as needed.

- ★ Info Sheet 1 – Importance of Breastfeeding
- ★ Info Sheet 2 – Breastfeeding Toddlers
- ★ Info Sheet 3 – Breastfeeding and Attachment
- ★ Info Sheet 4 – Breastfeeding and Integration into Child Care
- ★ Info Sheet 5 – Breastfeeding in Child Care Centres
- ★ Info Sheet 6 – Breastfed Children and Milk at Daycare
- ★ Info Sheet 7 – Handling Human Milk
- ★ Info Sheet 8 – Risks of Bottle Feeding
- ★ Info Sheet 9 – Breastfeeding and Diarrhea
- ★ Info Sheet 10 – Community Breastfeeding Services



Have we missed something?

Help us add to the Kit by suggesting topics for new information sheets:
info@mouvementallaitement.org

With the participation of
the Government of Canada



About the *Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Service Kit*

MAQ developed this set of practical, complementary tools help parents, child care directors, ECEs, staff, and volunteers to support families who wish to continue breastfeeding when their children are in child care.

To find other resources in the Kit:
mouvementallaitement.org/services-de-garde



Your breastfeeding
friendly resource

Info Sheet 1 – Importance of Breastfeeding

| Benefits of breastfeeding... | ... and the transition to child care |
|--|---|
| Reduction of risk of illness and infection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Breastmilk contains thousands of active substances that strengthen a child’s immune system, preventing certain illnesses or reducing their symptoms or duration. This is especially significant in the case of diarrheic or respiratory diseases. The protective effect is the result of immune cells and antibodies produced by the mother and adapted to the environment. ♥ Even partially weaned children benefit from adequate immune protection because antibodies are more concentrated in the milk. ♥ A child who has less frequent or severe illnesses is less likely to transmit infections to others in the child care facility or at home. |
| Optimal growth and development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Human milk is perfectly adapted to the age and the developmental and nutritional needs of the child. It continues to adapt as long as the child continues to breastfeed. |
| Emotional security and bonding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Breastfeeding helps mothers build strong bonds with their children and feel more confident about the transition to child care. ♥ Breastfeeding is comforting for children and meets their needs for emotional security. ♥ Breastfeeding makes a child’s integration into the child care setting easier, because it helps reduce the intensity of separation anxiety. |



*Before
knowing more about all the benefits of
breastfeeding for young children, I thought I would
have more trouble looking after children who were still
breastfeeding. Now I have a better understanding of the
parents’ decision and realize that it’s an advantage
for me and everyone.*

Fatima

ECE in an early childhood education centre

Info Sheet 2 – Breastfeeding Toddlers

Did you know?

Until two years of age and beyond

Health Canada and other organizations recommend sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding after six months.¹

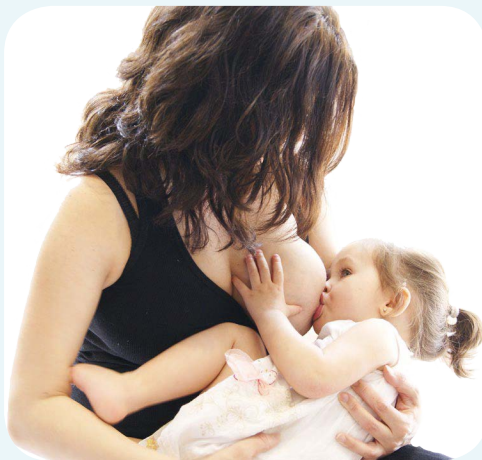
One or two children in each group

In Quebec, more than 16% of children are still breastfeeding at one year of age.² This means that an average of one or two toddlers in each group of ten children are breastfed.

I just got home from work and my daughter is nursing already. I hardly have time to take my coat off! Every drop of milk seems to make up for part of the long day we were apart. For us, breastfeeding after work is a special moment that helps me relax as well as my little one.

Jennifer

Maya's mom



Questions from early childhood educators

Does breastfeeding still have benefits for toddlers?

Absolutely! Breastfeeding has numerous benefits for children and mothers. As breastfeeding continues, human milk adapts to meet growing children's needs. The benefits are "dose-dependent": the more often and longer a child breastfeeds, the greater the benefits. Even after two years, breastmilk contains many components that enhance immunity. Human milk is therefore adapted to the needs of toddlers who are generally exposed to more sources of illness. Breastfeeding also helps strengthen a child's secure attachment from birth to weaning.



References

1. Joint statement of Health Canada et al. (2012). Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants: Recommendations from Birth to Six Months. <https://mouvementallaitement.org/bibliothequevirtuelle/items/show/1745>
2. Observatoire des tout-petits. (2019). Durée de l'allaitement total. <https://tout-petits.org/donnees/environnement-familial/comportements-a-risque-et-comportements-preventifs/allaitement/duree-de-l-allaitement-total/>

Info Sheet 3 – Breastfeeding and Attachment

Did you know?

Breastfeeding helps strengthen bonding and attachment

Breastfeeding is comforting and meets not only the nutritional needs of children, but also their need for closeness and security.

The breastfeeding relationship contributes to secure attachment

It allows a child to explore the environment confidently and gradually develop independence.



Questions from early childhood educators

One of the new children in my group is still breastfeeding. Are children ready to be integrated into a child care environment when they aren't weaned yet?

Not being weaned does not mean a child is not ready to be integrated into child care. Continuing to breastfeed during this time of change gives the child a solid base and sense of continuity. Weaning would represent an additional major change to the child, who is already trying to adjust to new people and a different environment. Furthermore, going to the child care centre is often the first long separation and coincides with a period of intense separation anxiety. It is completely normal for some children to take longer to adjust to this change than others.



When a new child joins my group, I work hard to create a relationship of trust and partnership with the parents, so I can adapt my interactions to each child's needs. One child, Maxime, had a lot of trouble every morning when his mother left. After talking to her about it, I decided to try wearing him in a sling to give him that comfort and closeness. It works really well, and his mother feels more confident about leaving Maxime with us for the day.

Clara

Maxime's ECE

Info Sheet 4 – Breastfeeding and Integration into Child Care

Did you know?

Breastfeeding makes integration easier

By strengthening a child’s sense of emotional security, breastfeeding reduces the intensity of separation anxiety. Separation anxiety is a normal phase of child development, whether a child is breastfed or not. Between 8 and 12 months, and often beyond, some children react more intensely to separation than others and express it by crying. Children should be given the time they need to feel safe and adapt to their new environment.

An important bond

Children who are breastfed are absolutely capable of developing a close connection with their caregivers and early childhood educators. The stronger the mother-child bond, the easier it is for the child to learn to trust others. It just takes time for children to adjust to new people, including the people who are caring for them.

I have found a lot of ways to help little ones I look after to go to sleep. However, none of these methods seemed to work for Paolo, who was used to nursing to sleep. I talked to his mother about it and asked how his grandparents comforted him when she wasn't there. Using her suggestions made it much easier to adjust my interactions to Paolo's needs. Now he goes to sleep like the others. Being on the parents' team is always a win-win situation.

Johanna

Paolo's ECE

Questions from early childhood educators

A new child in my group is having trouble adjusting and cries a lot. They're breastfed; what can I do to help?

Breastfeeding does not make adjustment harder. Whether a child is breastfed or not, it is vital that the early childhood educator or caregivers work in partnership with the family to find solutions. For example, you may want to suggest that parents develop a comforting separation ritual to use before they leave, or that they bring a familiar stuffed animal to the centre. Over time, the child will adjust to the new environment.



Info Sheet 5 – Breastfeeding in Child Care Centres

Did you know?

It's not necessary to have a space set aside for breastfeeding

It is possible to welcome parents who want to breastfeed at the child care centre even if the facility does not have a designated breastfeeding room. Some women are happy to breastfeed in a room where other children are playing, while others prefer to use a quiet and private space. Communication with the parents is key, to understand and respect their needs, explain your constraints, and agree on a suitable place.



My fifteen-month-old daughter cried every time I dropped her off. Her teacher suggested I sit in the dining room and take the time to nurse her before I left. Now my little girl starts every day peacefully and happily!

Laura
Eva's mother

Questions from early childhood educators

The mother of one of the children in my group would like to come and breastfeed during the day. How can we arrange these breastfeeding visits without disturbing our routine?

It is a good idea for the parent and the staff to agree on a schedule of breastfeeding visits to avoid interrupting activities as much as possible and to comply the facility's rules. For example, visiting between lunch and nap time might be a good idea. A predictable schedule of breastfeeding visits will help the child feel secure and avoid distress each time the parent leaves.

I let a woman in my group come and breastfeed her child every day at set times. I suggested she sit in the rocking chair in my living room so she could have some quiet time while I continued my routine in the daycare room downstairs. It didn't disturb me at all to have her there. I found that her visit helped her child be calm and go down for a nap more easily.

Prisha

Owner of a home daycare



Info Sheet 6 – Breastfed Children and Milk at Daycare

Did you know?

Water to quench thirst

When children eat a variety of complementary foods and are breastfeeding on cue (demand) when they are with their mother, all they need during their day at child care is water to quench their thirst. They will make up for the missing breastfeeds by nursing more often at home.



One of the new children in my group systematically refused to drink his milk and ate very little. I talked to his parents about my concerns. They reassured me that Karim breastfed a lot in the morning and the evening. I followed up with them regularly and, little by little, their child ate a bit more. He still won't drink milk during the day, but because he eats lots of solids and is still breastfed, I'm not worried any more.

Caroline

Karim's ECE

Questions from early childhood educators

In my group, there is a 9-month-old baby who is still breastfed and refuses categorically to drink any milk. What can I do to help?

This is not an unusual situation and children often need time to adjust. Some children prefer to eat solid foods with the other children and wait for their mothers to breastfeed. During the day, you can give children a bit of water to quench their thirst. When the time is right, they will learn to eat and drink different things with the person looking after them. If you are concerned, do not hesitate to discuss it with the parents, to better understand the situation and find solutions that will work for the individual child.



Info Sheet 7 – Handling Human Milk

Did you know?

No risk to staff

Handling milk does not pose any risk to child care staff. It is not necessary to wear gloves, unless someone has a cut on their hands that is not covered by a waterproof bandage.

Very low risk in the case of an administration error

The risk of transmitting an infection to a child through a single feeding is extremely low.¹

Variations in human milk

Breastmilk expressed by different people or on different days can have a variety of smells, colours, and characteristics. It may have a sour smell or separate (i.e., the fat may rise to the surface). These variations are normal and do not affect the quality of the milk.

Questions from early childhood educators

What should I do if a child is given someone else's milk?

Whether breastmilk or another milk is being used, precautions should be taken to avoid administration errors. In the case of an error, the procedure to follow is basically the same as for any other incident which occurs when a child is in your care. The correct procedure is explained in the *Guide d'intervention sur la prévention et le contrôle des infections dans les services de garde du Québec*.¹

Put the Handling *Human Milk* poster on the refrigerator for quick reference. This poster is in the Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Service Kit.

With the co-operation of the staff, we introduced several measures to better manage the containers of breastmilk. These measures are actually very similar to the ones we use for commercial infant formula. For example, we ask parents to ensure their child's name is put on every container; this is very important. In addition, the containers are arranged in the refrigerator according to group, so the early childhood educators can find each child's milk easily.

Céline

Director of a private child care centre



Photo: Cécile Fortin

Reference

1. Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. (2017). *Prévention et contrôle des infections dans les services de garde et écoles du Québec: guide d'intervention*. <http://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/fichiers/guide-garderie/chap3.pdf>

Info Sheet 8 – Risks of Bottle Feeding

Did you know?

Giving a baby to a breastfed baby is not recommended, unless he already takes a bottle at home.

A human nipple and a bottle nipple are not at all similar. Drinking from a bottle can affect the baby’s latch and jeopardize breastfeeding, even after breastfeeding has been going well for several months..



Questions from early childhood educators

One of the infants I look after is breastfed. What are some alternatives to bottles?

To avoid jeopardizing the breastfeeding relationship, an open cup (without a lid) can be used. Cup-feeding or drinking from a cup is safe and easy to learn. This technique can be used even with newborns! If the child is under a year of age, an adult should hold the cup. Between one and two years of age, children can learn to hold it themselves. Unlike spill-proof and 360 cups, drinking from open cups helps children learn to drink from glasses on their own.



At the beginning, I wasn't comfortable cup-feeding babies; I was afraid they'd choke. My advice is to fill a small cup as much as possible, so the baby won't have to tilt their head back and the milk doesn't come out too fast. Another tip: cup-feeding will get less messy as the baby practices!

Hanan

ECE in a home daycare

Info Sheet 9 – Breastfeeding and Diarrhea

Did you know?

Decreases the risk of diarrheic disease

Breastfed babies are at much lower risk of contracting a diarrheic disease, because of immunological factors in human milk.

Human milk: food and medicine

In the case of gastroenteritis, human milk not only prevents dehydration by providing the fluids and nutrients the child needs, but it also contains immunological factors to help the child fight the infection.



Until very recently, I always thought you shouldn't give milk to a child with vomiting and diarrhea. At our centre, we learned that breastmilk is beneficial for sick children and now I won't hesitate to give them breastmilk.

Christophe

ECE in an early childhood education centre

Questions from early childhood educators

One of the children in my group seems to have a stomach bug. Can I still give him breastmilk while we're waiting for his parents to pick him up?

Breastmilk is definitely the best option in the case of diarrhea. You can give small amounts of breastmilk regularly until the child's parents come; this will help prevent dehydration and help the child recover.



Info Sheet 10 – Community Breastfeeding Services

Did you know?

Resources across the province

There are nearly a hundred community breastfeeding resources in Quebec, located in every region. All offer free support services to women who are breastfeeding.

Trained volunteers

Volunteers in community organizations have received basic or extensive training in breastfeeding and can answer a wide range of questions. They can also speak to directors or staff in child care facilities about breastfeeding-friendly practices.

Since I didn't breastfeed my kids, I didn't know much at all about breastfeeding. In fact, I wasn't keen on it, especially for toddlers. Some breastfeeding support volunteers from a community organization came and gave a workshop at our ECE centre and explained the benefits of breastfeeding. Now I understand that breastfeeding is linked to lower separation anxiety. I really appreciated the workshop!

Teani
ECE in an early childhood education centre

Questions from early childhood educators

What are some of the ways we can work with community organizations?

There are many ways to work together! First, you can contact community organizations in your sector to discuss your needs. Breastfeeding volunteers will be able to answer your questions about accommodating people who want to breastfeed in your facility, alternatives to bottles, or handling human milk. Volunteers can also help you use the Kit and implement practices that are more breastfeeding friendly. Finally, since breastfeeding support is not part of your role, you can suggest that anyone with questions (for example, about pumping or weaning) contact the breastfeeding support groups or volunteers in your community.



Looking for community breastfeeding resources in your region?
mouvementallaitement.org/ressources