

# NCT Baby Feeding Policy



Baby feeding is one of the most rewarding and often most challenging aspects of parenting. When feeding goes smoothly it provides pleasure, a sense of fulfilment and closeness. However, feeding difficulties can be painful and deeply distressing. The NCT believes it is important for parents to have every opportunity for positive feeding experiences.

This Baby Feeding Policy is based on three core principles:

- Support for all parents
- Informed decision making
- Promotion of breastfeeding



## The NCT believes that:

1. All mothers and fathers need access to practical, evidence-based information, independent of commercial interests, to help them make decisions about feeding their baby. Information about the benefits and risks of breastfeeding and formula feeding should be widely available to children and adults of all ages so that feeding issues are well understood throughout society.
2. The UK Government and Food Standards Agency should fully implement the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, the WHO Code and relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions, which promote breastfeeding and protect parents from inappropriate pressure and poor information about baby feeding. Manufacturing companies, health professionals, and voluntary organisations concerned about family health and well-being should take active responsibility for ensuring the recommendations are upheld in practice.
3. Health professionals, and all those who work with new parents, should provide support by actively listening, giving encouragement and offering practical information and help. Individualised support is needed during pregnancy, at the time of the first feed and throughout the early days, and often influences whether breastfeeding is successfully established. Parents should be able to express any difficulties or concerns about feeding without feeling judged. Health professionals need up-to-date training on all aspects of infant feeding.
4. All those providing hospital or community-based maternity care should implement an externally evaluated structured programme that encourages breastfeeding, based on the best available evidence of effectiveness, using the Baby Friendly Initiative as a minimum standard.
5. Parents should be encouraged to make feeding choices that are right

### **The NCT provides trained breastfeeding counsellors, and campaigns for a breastfeeding-friendly culture, because:**

- Most women want to breastfeed and need good information and support in order to do so for as long as they choose.
- Breastfeeding is threatened (by commercial pressures, modern Western culture, employment practices etc.) and needs protection.
- It is important for health and well-being, particularly for more disadvantaged families.
- Breastfeeding has minimal impact on the environment so is part of a sustainable way of living.



for them and their baby. It is important for parents to feel confident and comfortable with their decisions. Therefore concerns about health issues should be balanced with recognition of the impact of social and emotional issues on baby feeding decisions.

6. There should be consistent, evidence-based information available to parents about the introduction of solid foods. For healthy babies born at term, the current recommended practice is to introduce solids foods from six months of age. Parents should not be encouraged, or feel pressurised, to introduce solids before this time. In some cases premature, low birth weight or sick babies may need specialised feeding before this age. Breastfeeding mothers should be supported to continue breastfeeding in addition to introducing solid foods for as long as they want to.
7. As social and cultural attitudes and expectations influence how parents

decide to feed their baby, Government departments across the UK should work together to promote policies and practice across education, employment, business, legal systems, healthcare, leisure and welfare to encourage a breastfeeding friendly culture. Similarly:

- Employers should have policies in place to reflect the International Labour Organization and Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding recommendations. Policies should include provision of extended maternity pay, flexible working arrangements, on-site crèches where possible, facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk and breastfeeding breaks.
- The mass media should play a positive role in shaping attitudes towards baby feeding. Broadcast, Internet and printed media referring to baby feeding should show images of breastfeeding and dialogue that

demonstrates awareness of the health and social issues, in order to encourage acceptance of, and confidence in, breastfeeding.

- Information about baby feeding should be included as part of education in schools for children of all ages, to ensure young people grow up aware that breastfeeding is the biological and historical norm.

8. As breastfeeding makes a major contribution to public health and has the potential to reduce health inequalities, resources and support should be targeted to parents in areas of disadvantage to:

- provide information in a variety of formats and languages, and
- establish peer support programmes, involving and empowering local mothers working in their own neighbourhood

9. As a supportive environment can help parents feed their baby when away from the home, public services, businesses and leisure facilities should be welcoming to parents and provide positive breastfeeding policies and baby feeding amenities:

- Parents should be able to feed their babies when they are hungry or need to be soothed. It is



important that parents feel supported when feeding outside the home, whether they breastfeed or bottle feed.

- Baby feeding facilities should be accessible to all parents and separate from public conveniences and from baby changing areas where possible. They should be clean with comfortable seating, drinking water, the option of a place to breastfeed in private and facilities to make up formula safely.

10. Health professionals and organisations should not accept sponsorship, advertising revenue, or educational grants from manufacturers of infant or follow-on formula, or bottles and teats, except for bottles that are part of a breast pump. Information for parents should not be provided, or sponsored by, manufacturers of infant or follow-on formula, or bottles and teats, except for bottles that are part of a breast pump.

**The NCT supports the WHO/UNICEF International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the subsequent Nestlé boycott,** so no Nestle products, such as Nescafe, should be used at any NCT event. Nestle is the target of an international boycott in 20 countries because it has more reported violations of the WHO Code than any other manufacturer.

# The NCT provides a range of services for parents, parents-to-be and health professionals

## We offer:

- mutual support for parents through an NCT branch network across the UK, local newsletters and opportunities to meet other parents and parents-to-be;
- antenatal courses, led by NCT-trained antenatal teachers and breastfeeding counsellors, that focus on preparing for labour, birth, baby feeding and life with a new baby;
- support from NCT breastfeeding counsellors, either face-to-face, at local drop-ins or via our Breastfeeding Line, as well as peer support from other mothers;
- Early Days groups, facilitated by NCT-trained postnatal leaders, covering common issues faced by new parents, including baby feeding, and opportunities to discuss concerns, share experiences and ideas;
- parent-centred, evidence-based information on the NCT website, in *Bumps and Babies* magazine distributed via the NHS, and from NCT Sales, which also offers practical products for parents and babies;
- detailed briefings, policies, and training through NCT Professional, for midwives, health visitors, GPs and commissioners.



## **Supporting policies**

The NCT Baby Feeding Policy is supported by referenced policy briefings on a range of topics including:

- Breastfeeding
- Formula feeding
- Introducing solid foods
- The WHO Strategy and Code

**For further copies of the NCT Baby Feeding Policy, please visit [www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk) or email [enquiries@nct.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nct.org.uk).**

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[www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk)

National Childbirth Trust is a registered charity (801395).