

Supply line and breastfeeding



Lactation- parent information

What is a supply line?

A supply line is a thin, soft tube that helps feed your baby while they are breastfeeding. One end of the tube goes next to your nipple. The other end goes into a container with expressed breast milk or formula. When your baby sucks at the breast, milk flows through the tube into their mouth. This helps your baby get enough milk and helps your body to make more milk.

A supply line is also called:

- Supplemental Nursing System (SNS)
- Supplementer
- Lactation aid



Why use a supply line?

Using a supply line can help your baby get more milk during breastfeeding. This extra sucking helps increase your milk supply. Babies who feed at the breast often breastfeed for longer. Breastfeeding also helps babies feel close and comforted, especially with skin-to-skin contact in the early weeks. Some babies find it hard to go back to the breast after using a bottle. A supply line can help avoid this by letting your baby feed at the breast while still getting extra milk.

You might use a supply line if:

- Your baby is born early (premature) or unwell and cannot suck well.
- Your baby needs more milk after breastfeeding, given by cup, tube or bottle.
- You have low milk supply, either short or long-term. More frequent feeding helps increase milk supply.
- You are trying to breastfeed again after stopping (re-lactating).
- You are trying to breastfeed an adopted baby or a baby born through surrogacy.

A Lactation Consultant, Midwife, or Child and Family Health Nurse can help decide if a supply line is right for you.



Types of supply line feeding

There are different supply lines. You can buy them at pharmacies or look on the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) website.

In hospital, a small feeding tube may be used with a syringe or bottle to give extra milk while the baby breastfeeds. You can also make your own setup with guidance. The ABA recommends watching a [YouTube](#) video to see how it's done (scan the QR code).

Sometimes, a nipple shield is used with the supply line. Some products even have the tubing attached to the shield.

Using your supply line

1. Wash your hands before starting.
2. Pour the right amount of milk into your container. Your lactation consultant, midwife, or child and family health nurse will discuss this with you.
3. Put the tube into the milk container.
4. Place the tip of the tube just past your nipple (2-3mm).
5. You can tape the tube to your breast to keep it in place.
6. When your baby latches, they will take both the nipple and the tubing in their mouth.
7. Your baby sucks and gets milk from both your breast and the tube.
8. Keep the container at the same height as your nipple. Lift it higher if you want more milk to flow.
9. Keep seeing your health worker for health worker for help while using the supply line.

How to clean the supply line

Clean the supply line right after the feed to stop germs from growing.

1. Use a syringe to push warm, soapy water through the supply line.
2. Rinse the tube with clean water to remove the soap.
3. Push air through the tube with the syringe to help dry it.
4. If the tube looks damaged, or if the instructions say so, throw it away.

For more information and advice

- Australian Breastfeeding Association helpline: 1800 686 268 breastfeeding.asn.au
- Your Midwife, Nurse, Child and Family Health Nurse or Lactation Consultant
- Australian Breastfeeding Association www.breastfeeding.asn.au or helpline 1800 686 268
- Raising Children Network www.raisingchildren.net.au
- Growing Healthy Kids Website <https://www.growinghealthykids.com.au/>
- Global Health Media Videos www.globalhealthmedia.org
- Private Lactation Consultant (cost involved)

This information is for guidance only and does not replace advice from your health care provider.