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**Preparing your baby for nursery**

Starting nursery is a time of great change for your baby, but there are some things you can do to help your baby prepare for the transition. The more attached a child is to their parent, the more difficult it will be for them to settle in, so preparing your baby to be cared for by somebody else is very important.

**Milk**

Most babies will still be having milk during the day when they start nursery. You can provide expressed breast milk, or we ask that you bring in their formula milk. We provide all cow’s milk.

If your baby is breastfed, then you will of course need to wean them onto a bottle or cup before they start at Carousel. Breastfeeding is much more than a way for a baby to get milk; it is a great source of comfort when they are upset as it gives them close contact with their mother and the sucking action soothes them too. Obviously, it is impossible for us to offer this method of comfort at nursery, so if your baby is reliant on breastfeeding for comfort then they will find it much harder to settle in. It is much better if a baby can be soothed with cuddles, play or a special toy. Dummies should be used sparingly after 1 year old.

We have a wide range of bottles at nursery, but if your baby is particularly fussy about the bottle they use then you are welcome to provide your own.

**Sleep**

Most babies start at Carousel when they are around one year old. All babies are different, but this is usually the time during a baby’s development when they will begin dropping down from 2 naps to 1. We find that some babies will refuse their morning nap at nursery, and will instead sleep happily with the other children after lunch at 12pm.

We can be flexible with our routine if your child still needs 2 naps, but we do not leave babies to cry for prolonged periods and we suggest that parents take a flexible approach to when and how long their baby sleeps for at nursery. When babies first start they may sleep for shorter periods than they ordinarily would at home; you can help your child to sleep well at nursery by ensuring they can self-soothe and go to sleep independently.

**Food**

We recommend that a mixture of spoon feeding and baby-led weaning is best, as we offer meals that require a spoon and others that babies can eat independently with their hands.

Babies who are spoon fed should be introduced to more lumpy textures before they reach 9/10 months old so that they get used to new textures and develop their swallowing muscles.

At Carousel we find that our babies eat the best of all of our children, because they do not *‘eat with their eyes’* as older children do. We would therefore recommend that you take this golden opportunity to introduce your baby to lots of different textures and flavours. We offer a very varied selection of meals at Carousel and all our menus are available to view on our website.