

E Nurture

A newsletter for breastfeeding mothers
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Breastfeeding Step-by-Step

Learn about the benefits of breastfeeding and the how-to's during your pregnancy through books, videos, and classes.

Begin breastfeeding during the first hour after the baby is born.

Position the baby at breast level, using pillows if necessary to support him and your arms. Hold him chest-to-chest with your body, so that his whole body is turned toward you. The baby should be facing your breast without having to turn his head. His mouth should be right in front of the nipple.

Help the baby to latch-on by supporting your breast with your hand underneath. Keep your fingers back so that his chin will not bump into them as he latches. Tickle the baby's lips with the tip of the nipple until the rooting reflex causes his mouth to open WIDE. Pull him onto the breast quickly. Make sure the baby's mouth is WIDE open on the breast, nose just touching and chin pressed into the breast. He should not be sucking on the tip of the nipple, but should have about 1/2 inch of the areola in his mouth as well. Sometimes it is necessary to pull down firmly on the baby's chin after he is latched-on to open his mouth further or to flare out his bottom lip. You should feel strong suction and a tugging sensation, but it should not be painful.

Don't watch the clock, watch the baby. Breastfeed on the first side until the baby is finished, then change sides (usually 10-20 minutes). Change sides to stimulate sucking if the baby falls asleep at the breast. At some feedings you may change sides three or four times.

Feed "On-Cue." Breastfeed when the baby stirs and begins making sucking movements with his mouth. Breastfeed every two to three hours at first, totaling at least eight to 10 breastfeedings in 24 hours.

Colostrum is the first milk you produce and it is all your baby needs to eat during the first days. Frequent breastfeedings will gradually increase the amount of colostrum you produce and help your milk to "come in" sooner.

To avoid engorgement problems breastfeed frequently from birth, even before the milk "comes in."

Babies often cluster their feedings together - breastfeeding every one to two hours for a stretch of time, then sleeping for a four to six hour stretch of time. This is OK as long as the baby gets at least eight feedings in 24 hours.

Avoid bottles of pumped breast milk or formula for about the first month. Babies and moms need time to learn to breastfeed and to establish the milk supply.

Rooming-in during your hospital stay will give you practice breastfeeding and caring for your baby. It will help you to learn your baby's patterns and give you confidence for when you go home.

Many babies have their days and nights mixed-up. They seem to sleep a lot during the day, then want to feed all night. Wake the baby to feed every two to three hours during the day to encourage daytime eating and nighttime sleeping. Breastfeed on demand during the night. Nighttime feedings when the baby is awake and eager may be your best breastfeedings during the early days after birth.

Limit visitors. Babies need care 24 hours a day, so you need extra rest to make up for what you miss at night. Visiting is fun, but tiring. The baby sleeps while people are

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there, then wakes to be fed just when mom is getting ready to rest. When you are just learning how to be a mom and how to breastfeed, take time for yourself and your baby.

How to tell the baby is getting enough. When the baby is five days old, he should have six to eight wet diapers and three to five bowel movements every 24 hours. During the first month, he should breastfeed at least eight times in 24 hours, for at least 10 minutes each feeding. You should hear him swallowing your milk. Your full breasts should be softer after a feeding.

If you want to increase your milk supply - Shorter, more frequent nursings do more to increase your milk than longer feedings that are farther apart. Breastfeeding for 10 minutes every hour will do more to increase your milk than breastfeeding for 30 minutes every three hours. You spend the same amount of time feeding, but will produce more milk with more frequent nursing.

Expect “growth spurts” - a day or two of frequent feedings to increase your milk supply as the baby grows. Then the baby will return to his usual feeding pattern. These usually happen around three weeks, six weeks, three months, and six months of age.

Your breasts will get softer and feel less full in a couple of weeks. This does not mean that you have lost your milk. It means that breastfeeding is becoming established and your body is working efficiently to make and deliver milk to your baby.

Call for help - Get information, support, and encouragement from people knowledgeable about breastfeeding. Call your lactation consultant, peer counselor, or La Leche Leader for answers to your questions as you go along.

Do you have questions, concerns, or comments?
Call the lactation consultants at
The Family Birth Place at Park Ridge Hospital.

Breastfeeding Helpline
(585) 368-4033