

Breastfeeding Basics



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and World Health Organization (WHO) agree: Exclusive breastfeeding is ideal nutrition and sufficient to support optimal growth and development for approximately the first six months after birth.

Getting Started: Breastfeeding FAQs

WHEN DO I FEED MY BABY?

Babies nurse best if they are fed when they are hungry. Babies give you signs to let you know they are hungry, such as hand-to-mouth movement, sucking on fists or fingers, or rooting or searching for the breast. Crying is a late sign of hunger.

HOW DO I MAKE ENOUGH MILK?

Almost every mother can make plenty of milk. Breastfeeding works on the simple principle of supply and demand. The more baby nurses, the more milk you will make.

HOW OFTEN AND HOW LONG DO I FEED MY BABY?

For the first couple of days, a newborn baby may nurse about 6-10 times per day. Many new babies are sleepy the day of their birth; let baby transition to life and feeding gradually. By day three, newborn babies nurse about 8-12 times a day. If you find that baby is having fewer than 8 feedings in a 24-hour period, you may want to wake the baby for feedings.

Generally, a breastfed baby nurses every 1-3 hours, but every baby is different.

HOW DO I LATCH MY BABY TO THE BREAST?

The number one reason for pain during breastfeeding is a bad latch. Getting a comfortable latch may take some practice. If you're having pain, please ask to see the lactation consultant. Signs of a good latch include: It doesn't hurt; baby has a wide mouthful of breast tissue, flanged lips (like fishy lips), and rounded cheeks; baby's chin is touching the breast and the nose is slightly away.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT NIGHT?

Moms and babies are remarkably "tuned in" to one another even during sleep. You do not need to be afraid that you will sleep through your child's hunger cues. Most newborns feed more at night than during the day, especially when they are two and three days old. Breastfeeding frequently, especially at night, establishes a full milk supply as quickly as possible.

HOW DO I KNOW MY BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH?

This is a big concern for most moms. This checklist can help you feel confident about baby's intake:

- The newborn nurses 8-12 times a day. (It is common for babies to nurse very frequently just before mom's milk volume increases between days 3 and 5 postpartum.)
- Mom experiences breast fullness between days 3 and 5 postpartum.
- After breast fullness occurs, at least one breast feels softer after a feeding.
- After day 5, baby has 3-4 golden, yellow stools and 6-8 noticeably wet diapers.
- Baby seems satisfied after most feedings.
- Baby wakes for feedings.
- Baby has regained birth weight by 2 weeks old.

DOES BREASTFEEDING HURT?

Breastfeeding is not supposed to hurt. Many moms breastfeed comfortably and enjoyably from the first day. At times, new moms may experience some nipple pain, but it generally lasts a very short time. Initial latch pain tends to peak between days 3 and 5, and is usually gone altogether by day 7 to 10. In the first few days you may feel uterine cramping during or directly after a feeding.

Cracks, bleeding, blisters, and bruises are never "normal." These are the result of a latch problem! If you've checked for a latch issue and baby's positioning, but still don't feel better, ask to see a lactation consultant. If you're home, call a volunteer helpline or lactation consultant for help.

WHAT CAN I EAT AND DRINK WHILE BREASTFEEDING?

Forget the myth – gassy foods will NOT make baby gassy too. A healthy diet will help you to feel good, but don't worry, your milk will always be fine for baby even if you make a few stops at a fast-food restaurant! You should, however, limit caffeinated beverages like coffee or iced tea (which could keep baby awake too). The AAP states that breastfeeding mothers may have one alcoholic drink and not have to skip a feeding.

Getting Help from Lactation Experts

RESOURCES FROM REDEEMER HEALTH

The nurses and lactation consultant at Redeemer Health are happy to get you off to a great start – just let them know you wish to breastfeed your baby, and they will provide you with more detailed information. You can also find Redeemer's Health's "Breastfeeding Benefits" at www.redeemberbaby.com.

FREE LACTATION HELP

Studies have shown that women breastfeed longer when they have support from volunteer breastfeeding counselors. You are lucky to live in an area that has many volunteer groups from which to choose. To find a group in your local area, or for general breastfeeding questions, contact:

Breastfeeding Resource Center, 215-886-2433,
www.breastfeedingresourcecenter.org

Nursing Mother's Advisory Council, 215-572-8044,
www.nursingmoms.net

La Leche League International, 1-877-4-laleche,
www.llli.org

PROFESSIONAL LACTATION CONSULTANTS

For even more help, International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are health care professionals who provide home or office consultations. You may want to call your insurance company to see if you are eligible for these services. If you are eligible but there are no in-network providers available, consider asking if you can seek out-of-network coverage.

Getting Help from Partners and Other Support People

Partners and other support people may not be able to breastfeed baby, but there are many things they can do to help make breastfeeding successful.

GREAT TIPS FOR PARTNERS

- Guard against too many visitors, and resist pressure to separate mom and baby. Help them spend lots of time snuggling together in the hours and days after birth.
- Help more with shopping, household chores, and care for any other children.
- Encourage naps while you watch over baby.
- Bring mom a drink or a snack while baby is feeding.
- Do something special, maybe a flower or a private note. It doesn't have to be expensive.
- Personal care is important. Take care of baby while your partner gets a stress-free shower!
- Make time for just you and baby – a walk in the stroller or a carry in a baby sling. Baby needs cuddles and hugs from you, too.

- Get to know baby by taking care of other needs besides feeding – dress and undress, diaper, bathe, cuddle and play with baby.
- Be the shield when nursing in public to keep mom comfortable.

TOP TIPS FOR GRANDPARENTS

- Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for baby's first six months of life. No water, formula, juice, or cereal is required.
- Getting comfortable with latching the baby takes time. – can take several weeks for some moms. And, while it's normal for moms to have soreness for the first minute of the feeding in the first 10 days, it is NOT normal for the entire feeding to be painful.
- Baby drives the milk production. Look for baby's feeding cues to determine when the baby needs to nurse. The baby is the ONLY one who knows how much milk was available, how much they took in, and when they need to nurse again. Trust them!
- If mom has questions, help her to find the answers! A bottle of formula doesn't have to be the answer!