

## Breastfeeding Q&A

How can I prepare my breasts for nursing?

Keep the skin around your nipples healthy. Avoid excess rubbing or stimulation since this might damage the skin. Your body will prepare your breasts for breast-feeding. Rubbing or stimulating your nipple can cause your uterus to contract, leading to a possibility of preterm labor if you are early in your pregnancy, or undue stress on the baby if you are near delivering. It's best to avoid using lotions or alcohol on your breasts. You can do normal cleaning of the breasts when bathing or showering. If you have inverted nipples (nipples that are turned inward) ask about what you may need to do when breast-feeding.

Should my diet be any different?

You will need to consume about 500 extra calories each day to help you produce healthy breast milk. Otherwise your breastfeeding diet is the same as your pregnancy diet. To be sure you are not getting too many calories, watch your weight - many women return to their normal weight quickly while breastfeeding, but others do not because

What about medicines, drugs, and alcohol?

These can get into your breast milk. Don't use anything, even nonprescription medicine from the drug store unless you first check with your doctor. It's best to avoid alcohol and smoking while you are pregnant and even later, when breast-feeding.

When do I nurse the baby?

The first time to breast feed should be as soon as possible after the delivery since the baby is more awake and willing to nurse at this time. The first few feedings are usually a "get acquainted" time. Your baby may not be very hungry at first, and your milk will not yet have started flowing fully. Try to nurse anyway, but don't get discouraged if the baby does not seem to get much. The baby will be getting colostrum (the very early milk that the breast makes) which is very healthy. Nursing about every one and a half to three hours helps bring in milk, gives the baby fluid that it needs, and helps the baby's digestive system start cleaning itself out. Most babies need and want about ten to twelve feedings every twenty-four hours.

How do I nurse?

Nursing can usually begin when the baby is first brought to you. The baby's body should be turned toward you with the baby's tummy turned to your tummy and the baby's knee against your stomach. This position prevents the baby's mouth from slipping and helps keep your nipples from getting sore. Touching the baby's lower lip will usually make its mouth open wide, then bring the baby to your breast. As much as possible of the areola (the dark circle around your nipple) should be in the baby's mouth. After about ten to fifteen minutes, gently put your little finger in the corner of the baby's mouth and push the mouth open. This breaks the suction and lets you easily remove the nipple. Switch to the other breast and let the baby nurse for another ten to fifteen minutes. By the time you get home, the feeding time should approach about ten minutes on each breast. Babies do not follow set schedules and may not nurse the same amount of time at each feeding.

How can I tell if baby is getting enough milk?

- Watch that the baby is swallowing while nursing.
- The baby should be content for one or more hours after feeding.
- The baby has 6-8 wet cloth diapers a day, or first few days after birth). 5-6 wet disposable diapers a day (the baby may have less the
- The baby is having stools (bowel movements) at least every day or two.

What can I do if I have problems nursing?

If you have any problems at all, do not get discouraged and think it would be easier to switch to a bottle. First, talk to your doctor or the nursing staff and let them help you. You can also call the hospital nursery (anytime day and night). There are support groups, breast-feeding centers, and lactation consultants in many states. Ask your doctor, nurse, hospital staff, or La Leche League (281-480-2555) for assistance.

What if I have to stop nursing for some reason?

If breast-feeding is delayed after birth, stopped for a while, or if you and baby are separated, you will want to use a breast pump or hand express to maintain your milk supply and empty your breasts. Ideally, if the baby is not nursing six hours after birth, you should begin to stimulate your milk supply by stimulating your breasts. Ask the hospital personnel for assistance with this.

How do I use a breast pump?

- Read the instructions carefully.
- Wash your hands and cleanse your breast with clean water, then dry
- Get comfortable and relax. Think about the baby
- Massage your breast from the chest wall to the nipple with the flat of the hand. Use your fingertips to massage in circles from the full area toward the nipple
- Begin pumping (pumping should NOT hurt)
- Alternate breasts as the flow decreases (or every five to ten minutes) to stimulate supply
- Save the milk in a sterilized baby bottle in increments of four ounces. Cover and place in the refrigerator for up to forty-eight hours or freeze the milk for up to six months. Do not keep breast milk the baby partially drinks or add fresh breast milk to frozen breast milk

How do I hand express breast milk?

- Wash your hands and cleanse your breasts with clean water and dry

- Get comfortable and relax. Think about the baby
- Massage your breast from the chest wall to the nipple with the flat of the hand. Use fingertips to massage in circles from the full area toward the nipple
- Place thumb and fingers one and a half inches from the nipple
- Push back towards the chest wall
- Roll your fingers around the breast to empty all ducts
- Alternate breasts as the flow decreases (or every five to ten minutes) to stimulate supply
- Save the milk in a sterilized baby bottle in increments of four ounces. Cover and place in the refrigerator for up to forty-eight hours or freeze the milk for up to six months. Do not keep breast milk the baby partially drinks or add fresh breast milk to frozen breast milk

What else should I know about pumping or hand expressing?

Avoid sliding your fingers over skin or pulling on the nipple itself. Fingers should remain away from nipple so milk doesn't run over the fingers. Milk that runs over your fingers might get germs in it and should be thrown away.

Whatever method you choose, pump or hand, it will take time and practice to master this. Consider your first few attempts as practice and do not expect any milk on your first few tries. If you do get milk the first few times, consider it a bonus.