

Breastfeeding in the First Weeks

Learning about breastfeeding

- Talk to other women who have breastfed. Take a breastfeeding class, read books or pamphlets.
- Having a new baby is a big change in your life whether you breastfeed or not. Breastfeeding and baby care become easier with practice and experience.

Beginning to breastfeed

- Breastfeed as soon as possible after birth.
- Hold your undressed baby next to your bare skin. Snuggling skin-to-skin gives you and your baby the best start for breastfeeding, and is the best way to keep baby warm and calm.
- Keep your baby with you in your hospital room so you can breastfeed every 1½ to 3 hours.
- Before going home, ask a nurse to watch an entire feeding to make sure your baby is getting breastmilk.

Breastfeed your baby often

Breastfeed every 1½ to 3 hours, or 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. Your baby needs your first milk (colostrum) before your milk becomes abundant. Breastfeed often so your body knows to make enough milk. Your breasts do not need to “rest” or “fill up” between feedings. You are always making milk!

Breastfeed when your baby first shows signs of hunger

Babies let you know they are hungry by:

- sucking on his or her hands; lip smacking.
- rooting — turning his head sideways with mouth open.
- fussing.

If your baby is crying, a late sign of hunger, calm him before trying to breastfeed.

Three Steps to a Good Latch



Step 1. Turn your baby on his side with his face, tummy and knees toward you. Pull baby's bottom into your body with your forearm. Your nipple should be pointed at baby's nose.



Step 2. If you support your breast with your hand, make sure you place your thumb and fingers back away from the nipple. Tickle your baby's nose with your nipple. As your baby opens his mouth wide, let his head tilt back. Now your nipple is pointed at the roof of baby's mouth. Bring baby to the breast chin-first.



Step 3. Baby's chin should be pressed into your breast. Baby's nose will be clear of the breast or will touch slightly. Make sure baby has a good, deep latch and a mouthful of breast.

Ending the feeding

Let your baby end the feeding. Your baby will let go or fall asleep when he is no longer hungry. He will look very content. If needed, break suction before you take baby off your breast by gently sliding your finger between your baby's gums and into his mouth.

Avoid formula, bottles or pacifiers

Avoid formula in the first 4 to 6 weeks. Giving your baby formula tells your body not to make milk and will cause your milk supply to decrease. Artificial nipples, if used in the early weeks, can confuse your baby and can also decrease your milk supply. Breastfed babies don't need water, sugar water or formula.