

Breastfeeding Basics: The First Weeks

Your decision to breastfeed is an important one for you and your baby. When you breastfeed, you can be sure you are giving your baby the best nutrition with benefits that will last a lifetime.

Tips During the Hospital Stay:

- Choose a hospital that is Baby-Friendly®
- Practice skin-to-skin care. All babies should be placed on their mother's chests immediately following delivery for at least one hour and then as often as they like.
- Feed your baby as soon as possible after delivery.
- Plan to exclusively breastfeed, meaning your baby will receive only your breastmilk.
- Keep your baby in the same room with you at all times.
- Most babies feed 8-12 times every 24 hours.
- Avoid giving bottles or pacifiers.
- Ask for breastfeeding help.
- If your baby is unable to breastfeed, request a breast pump.

Benefits of Skin-to-Skin:

- Calms you and your baby.
- Releases hormones that relieve stress and stabilize baby's heart rate, breathing rate, temperature, and blood sugar.
- Babies cry less.
- Helps colostrum flow more easily. Colostrum is the first milk, which is full of nutrients that protect baby.
- Babies gain weight faster
- Improves baby's immune system by helping protect against illness and disease.
- Helps moms breastfeed longer by increasing their milk supply and bonding with their babies.



Benefits of Skin to Skin

- Strengthens baby's brain development through the smells, textures, and sounds that baby experiences while on mom's or dad's chest.
- Decreases mom's risk of postpartum mood disorder.
- Allows mom to take a break and rest.

Watch your baby for feeding cues

Offer baby the breast when he or she shows hunger cues:

- Moves hand or fists to the mouth.
- Makes sucking motions.
- Smacks lips.
- Nuzzles or looks for the breast.

Allow baby to end feeding when he or she shows signs of fullness:

- "Falls off" or releases the breast.
- Turns away from the nipple.
- Fists open and body relaxes.

Easy Steps to Latching:

1. Hold your baby beneath your breasts with baby's entire body facing you.
2. Keep baby's ear, shoulder, and hips in a straight line.
3. Touch baby's upper lip with your nipple. Then wait for baby's mouth to open.

4. Quickly bring baby deep onto the breast. Baby's chin should touch your breast, but there needs to be enough space between baby's nose and your breast to keep an open airway.
5. Baby's lips are turned outward.
6. As baby sucks, you should feel a pull-tugging sensation, but not pain. If you experience pain or pinching, break the suction by sliding your finger into the corner of baby's mouth and try again.
7. Allow baby to feed on the first side for as long as wanted. Burp the baby. If he or she still shows signs of hunger, offer the other breast.

Proper Nipple Care

- Begin feeding on the least sore nipple because the hungrier baby is, the more vigorously baby will breastfeed.
- Make sure baby is properly positioned.
- Make sure baby has a good latch.
- Look at your nipple when it comes out of baby's mouth:
 - Your nipple should look the same coming out as it did going in – not pinched.
 - If it appears pinched or angled on the tip (like a new tube of lipstick), baby is improperly latched. Request breastfeeding help as soon as possible.

You will know breastfeeding is going well when:

- Baby wakes to feed.
- You hear swallowing when baby feeds.
- Your breasts soften during the feeding.
- Baby has plenty of wet and dirty diapers.
- Baby has regained to birth weight within 10-14 days.

Diapers—What is normal?

- At least one wet diaper and one poop on day one.
- On day three, breastfed babies usually have 3-4 wet diapers and 1-2 poops.
- During week one, stools will change from black and tarry to yellow and liquid. This is normal and is not diarrhea. Normal stool texture is liquid to soft. In the first few weeks, some babies have a poop diaper after each feeding. You will notice more wet and poop diapers as your milk supply increases.
- Later during the first week, breastfed babies usually have about six wet diapers and a yellow poop after almost every feeding.

Tips to increase milk supply:

- Breastfeed every time baby is hungry.
- Make sure baby latches well.
- Offer both breasts at every feeding.
- Empty breasts at each feeding.
- Avoid bottles and pacifiers in early weeks.
- Pump or express breastmilk.
- Relax and massage.
- Take care of yourself by eating well, drinking enough, and getting plenty of rest.

Steps to a good latch:



Watch the baby, not the clock, for feeding and fullness cues.

Be patient with yourself and your baby. Breastfeeding is a learned skill that takes practice.

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