

Tips For Breastfeeding Success

Why should I breastfeed?

Your breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. Breast milk is the only food needed for the first six months of life for most full-term, healthy babies. Each mother's milk is well suited to meet the needs of her own baby.

What are some of the advantages of breastfeeding?

Your breast milk has antibodies, which protect your baby against many common infections. Breastfed babies are sick less often. They also have fewer problems with allergies, asthma, sudden infant death syndrome, iron deficiency anemia and many other medical problems.

Women who breastfeed also benefit. They have less bleeding after childbirth and get back to their pre-pregnancy weight faster. They have fewer cancers of the ovary, uterus or breast. Osteoporosis, which causes bone fractures, is less common in women who breastfeed. Breastfeeding also saves money.

How do I get breastfeeding off to a good start?

It helps to learn about breastfeeding while you are pregnant by reading, taking a breastfeeding class or joining a breastfeeding support group. If you have good information about breastfeeding before you have your baby, you will be better prepared for breastfeeding when your baby is born. Remember that breastfeeding is a skill that you will have to practice after your baby is born.

Try to breastfeed your baby within the first hour after birth if possible. Then breastfeed as often as your baby seems to be hungry. Your hospital may have lactation specialists who can give you good advice before you go home.

Breastfed babies should feed 8 to 12 times each day during the first 6 weeks of life. This means they will nurse every 1 to 3 hours except for one longer stretch of sleep during each 24-hour period. More frequent nursing sessions during the first hours and weeks after birth help increase your milk supply.

You may need to wake your baby if he or she falls asleep while feeding at the breast. Your baby should suck in a regular rhythm and should swallow often while breastfeeding.

How can I tell that my baby is getting enough milk?

During the first 2 to 3 days of life, your baby will get a special kind of thick milk called colostrum. Colostrum is produced in just the right amount to meet your baby's needs. Sometime between days 3 and 5, you will feel your breasts become fuller as your body makes a larger amount of milk. Once the colostrum changes to milk, you should expect your baby to produce 6 to 8 wet diapers and at least 2 to 3 stools each day. Some babies have a bowel movement every time they breastfeed during the first 6 weeks.

If your baby is not wetting and having stools this often, or if you think that your baby is not getting enough breast milk, call your doctor. Weighing your baby will help you see if your baby is growing at a normal rate. Breastfed babies should get back to their birth weight by the time they are 2 weeks old. Babies usually gain from 1/2 to 1 ounce a day or 3 to 7 ounces a week.

What can I do to prevent sore nipples?

Correct positioning and latch-on are the two most important things to help prevent sore nipples. Positioning is the way you hold your baby. Latch-on is what your baby does with its mouth and tongue when contact is made with your breast.

Make sure that your baby's ears, shoulders and hips are positioned in a straight line. Place one hand behind your baby's neck and head for support. Place your other hand to support your breast while your baby is feeding from it. The hand supporting your breast should be shaped in a curve like the letter C, with your thumb placed on the top of your breast and all other fingers under your breast. You should support your breast with your hand during all breastfeedings during the first 6 weeks.

Tickle your baby's lips with your nipple and wait for your baby to open his or her mouth wide and root toward your breast. Your baby might make licking movements with his or her mouth and then try to bite down on your nipple. Wait until the mouth is open wide. Once your baby's mouth is open wide, lift your breast with your hand and insert the whole nipple into the center of your baby's mouth. At the same time, use your other arm to bring your baby's head in close to your body. Your baby's mouth should clamp down and latch on to the areola with the tongue placed under the nipple. The areola is the pinky-brown circle of skin around the nipple.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor

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Information published in "American Family Physician" a peer-reviewed journal of the American Academy of Family Physicians September 15, 2001

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