



Breastfeeding

There are many rewards to breastfeeding. Breastfeeding helps to develop a close bond between you and your infant and provides your new baby with the best nutrition. Breast milk has nearly a perfect mix of vitamins, proteins and fat.

Breast milk contains antibodies (substances that can protect your baby against some illnesses). For the sick or fragile baby, it is a medicine that only mom can provide. Babies who are fed breast milk are usually healthier. They have fewer allergy problems like eczema and asthma; they have fewer ear infections, fewer digestive problems and are not hospitalized as often as those fed formula.

Breast milk may also offer some protection against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Making breast milk burns calories so it can help you lose weight.

Breastfeeding takes practice. It may take some time for you to be successful. It does not always happen by instinct as it does in animals. Read the tips below to learn how to breastfeed.

How to breastfeed

- Try to be as relaxed as possible. If you are tense and nervous, it can interfere with the milk “let-down” and the flow of milk. Sit in a comfortable chair.
- Hold your baby with his tummy touching yours. Baby's ear, shoulder and hip should be in a straight line (Picture 1).
- Press in and let go a few times on the areola (air ee OH lah), the darker outer part of your nipple. This will help start the flow of milk.



Picture 1 Relax and enjoy this special time with baby.

- Stroke your baby's upper lip with your nipple. The stroking will cause your baby to open his mouth wide to find the nipple.
- Teach your baby to "latch on" with his tongue down and mouth wide open.
- It can take a little time for your baby to learn how to get a large part of the areola into his mouth. When he learns to do this, he will start pressing on the areola with his tongue and gums while sucking on the nipple. This action will make the milk flow.
- Let your baby nurse on the first breast as long as possible. After the first breast, you should offer the second breast in case your baby is still hungry.
- For the next breastfeeding, start on the breast that was not used before. If your baby is fed from both breasts, use the one that you ended with, first.
- One baby may nurse quickly and finish feeding in 15 minutes. Another may need to nurse for 30 minutes to finish feeding. Some babies nurse from one breast at some feedings and both breasts at other times. Every baby has his or her own style.
- You may need to change the position of the baby to drain the breast of milk. This helps the baby get all of your milk and prevents problems with breast engorgement. To use the football hold, position the baby under your arm on the side where your baby will nurse. Support the head with your hand. It is easier to do the football hold if the baby lies on a pillow (Picture 2).



Picture 2 Football hold

Burping your baby

Your baby may swallow air while breastfeeding. This air should be brought up or "burped" to prevent stomach pain. Infants sometimes need to be burped midway through and at the end of feeding. To remove the air bubbles, sit your baby on your lap and support his head with your hand. With your other hand, gently pat or rub his back. A little milk may come out with the burp. Have a clean cloth ready.

Feeding schedule and your baby's nutrition

- Breastfed babies may eat more often than babies fed with formula. This is because breast milk is easier for babies to digest. Your baby will need to be breastfed every 1 to 3 hours at first.
- Night feedings must be given during the first few months of life. Remember, your baby will outgrow this need.

- In time, your baby will let you know how often and how long he needs to nurse. Signs of hunger include infants bringing their hands to their mouths, rooting, lip smacking, sticking tongue out, and crying.
- Your baby is getting the right amount of milk if he gains 4 to 7 ounces per week for the first few months. Talk with your doctor if you are concerned about your child's weight. There should be at least six wet diapers and three bowel movements each day after the first week.
- Your baby's doctor will want you to give the baby a vitamin supplement with at least 400 IU of Vitamin D. The doctor may also suggest giving iron and fluoride.

Bottle feedings

Avoid bottle feedings during the first 3 weeks or until breastfeeding is well established. When you need to be away from your baby for a few hours, you may substitute a bottle. Breast milk in the bottle is best. Refer to the Helping Hand HH-IV-61, *Breast Care and Expressing Milk* to learn how to express milk manually (remove by hand). For information about using a hospital grade electric pump (the type of pump used in the hospital), refer to Helping Hand HH-IV-85, *Breast Milk for Your Hospitalized Infant: Electric Breast Pump*.

When you cannot pump your own milk, your baby may be fed formula. Doctors recommend babies be fed breast milk during the first 12 months.

How to care for your breasts

You do not need to wash your breasts before or after breastfeeding. Just let the milk dry on your breasts. You should wash your breasts with clear, warm water daily when you shower. To learn more, refer to the Helping Hand HH-IV-61, *Breast Care and Expressing Milk*.

Your nutrition

- Mothers who breastfeed need to eat more calories and protein each day than they would normally (Picture 3). Adding an extra meal or snacks each day, such as a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a glass of milk, adds calories and protein. Good sources of protein include chicken, meat, fish, milk, cheese, eggs, and nuts.
- Eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of liquids gives you energy and helps you stay strong. You should limit drinks with caffeine such as coffee, tea, colas, and energy drinks. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of liquids each day so your urine stays pale yellow.



Picture 3 Breastfeeding mothers need more calories, protein and liquids in their daily diets.

Menstruation

Your menstrual periods may stop during the time you are breastfeeding. However, if you do not want to become pregnant, ask your doctor to suggest the birth control method that is best for you. Be sure to tell your doctor you are breastfeeding. Some birth control medicines interfere with breastfeeding. They can reduce your milk supply.

Medicines

- Avoid using medicines when possible. This includes cold remedies, herbs, high dose vitamins and dietary supplements. Alcohol is a drug and should be avoided. Marijuana and other street drugs can harm your baby when breastfeeding.
- Most prescription drugs are safe to use. Check with your doctor, pharmacist or lactation specialist to be sure.

Smoking

Smoking in the same room with your baby is harmful to your baby. It increases the risk of your child having colds, respiratory problems and possibly SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Smoking more than 10 cigarettes a day decreases a mother's milk supply. For more information, refer to Helping Hand HH-IV-68, *Secondhand Smoke*.

When to call the doctor

Call your doctor if:

- Your breasts stay swollen or painfully engorged after expressing milk several times.
- Your breasts feel hot or sore when you touch them.
- Your breast is reddened.
- Your nipples are sore, cracked or bleeding.
- You develop a fever higher than 101°F.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor, nurse, or lactation consultant.