

BREAST FEEDING - NOURISHING YOUR BABY

Getting Started

Breast milk is good for your baby. It is superior to any alternative form of infant formula and is uniquely designed to meet the nutritional needs of your infant. It contains antibodies which will help protect your baby against illness. Breastfeeding is easy, inexpensive, and convenient; there are no bottles to wash and no formula to prepare. Breast milk is easy to digest, and less allergenic, thus there are fewer problems with constipation and diarrhea. Breastfeeding provides a special bonding for baby and mother. It also helps mom get back into shape by contracting the uterus.

While breastfeeding may be the natural thing to do, it helps to know a little about how to do it.

Here are a few steps to help you get started:

- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Hold your baby close to your breast and turn your baby so you are tummy to tummy.
- Hold the breast in your hand and gently stroke the baby's lips with the nipple until the baby opens wide. Your baby has a "rooting reflex" which will make him turn his mouth toward your touch.
- Pull the baby onto your breast, helping him to take in as much of the brown area of the nipple as possible.
- Nurse the baby on both breasts, about 10 minutes per side, burping in between.
- To remove the baby from the breast, place your finger in the corner of his mouth to break the suction.
- Proper positioning of the baby on the breast and using different positions to hold your baby while nursing is very important to reduce nipple soreness.

Collecting and Storing Breast Milk

Situations arise where you may need to be separated from your baby; school, work or an evening out. When this occurs, you may wish to pump and store your milk ahead of time. There are a number of different breast pumps available and you will need to find the one that fits your needs.

Breast milk may be stored in the refrigerator for 48 hours. To freeze breast milk, first cool it in the refrigerator, and then put it into the freezer. Frozen breast milk should be used within 3 months if it is stored in the freezer compartment of a refrigerator. Milk stored in a deep freezer is good for 6 months. Remember to label the breast milk with the date that you pumped it. Thaw milk in the refrigerator or in warm water just before feeding. Thawed milk must be used within 24 hours.

Note: freezing breast milk destroys some of its antibodies.

You may introduce a bottle of breast milk or formula at 2-3 weeks of age (2-3 times/week). This is enough to get your baby used to a bottle, but not so much that it will compromise your breast milk supply.

How do I know my baby is getting enough milk?

1. Your baby should have at least 6-8 wet diapers per day and frequent bowel movements. Call us if your newborn is stooling less than 4 times a day in the first two weeks of life.
2. Initially, your baby should nurse 8-14 times over 24 hours (every 1 1/2 to 3 hrs). In the first 2 weeks of life, you should wake your baby for feedings if she sleeps beyond 5 hours.

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About the Author

Claire Martin is a parenting writer at the *Denver Post*. Her writing has won national and regional awards, and has appeared in publications such as the *St. Petersburg Times*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Sunset* magazine. She lives in Denver with her husband and two daughters, both of whom were breastfed.

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3. Your breast should feel full before feeding and softer after your baby has nursed.
4. In general, your baby should seem satisfied and content after feeding. If you are concerned, you should call us. We may want to have the baby weighed

Engorged Breasts

Most new moms have engorged breasts-it's common, but painful. As the milk comes in for the first time, the vessels surrounding the lymph nodes are flushed with blood. Engorged breasts are hard, are hot, can hurt, and-as you pointed out- can make it difficult for a newborn to latch on because the areola is too firm. There are several ways to relieve engorged breasts:

Take a very warm (but not unbearably hot) shower. Stand with your back to the shower, and gently massage out the milk by hand. (Don't worry-you'll still have plenty of milk left for the baby, and it will take a while for your breasts to replace the expressed milk.) Express until your breasts are soft enough to allow the baby to latch on and suckle. Your breasts will still feel huge, but more pliant.

Place raw cabbage leaves-whole or torn-in your bra. No one really knows why this works, but something in the cabbage leaves reduces engorgement.

Warm a couple of hand towels in the dryer or microwave. (They're ready when they're hot enough to barely handle, like the heated towels that customers use at Japanese restaurants.) Lay the warm towels on your breasts. The heat probably will inspire some letdown, which will relieve the pressure, and the towels will absorb the milk.

Use a breast pump (electric pumps are better than hand pumps) to empty some milk from your breasts. This is easier than taking a shower if you're still recovering from a c-section, and you can save the milk in the freezer to use later.

Let the baby nurse as often as she wants. This will help your milk supply stabilize more quickly and reduce the engorgement. Feeding sessions may last 15 to 40 minutes at first. As your baby gets older, she'll become more efficient at nursing and may nurse for only 10 to 15 minutes or so.

Find the number for your local La Leche League club, and call the leader; she can share practical advice and lend support.

Supplementing Breast Milk with Formula

If you're exclusively breastfeeding your baby, you usually don't need formula. But it can be difficult to pump enough to satisfy a growing baby, especially during growth spurts, if you're working too. Your baby can safely take both breast milk and formula. The only concern might be that if your baby is less than 6 weeks old, she could be susceptible to nipple confusion and find that bottle-feeding is easier than breastfeeding.

Look at it this way: At least your baby's had the advantage of a breast milk-only diet for 6 months. That's longer than many moms manage! And, if you continue to nurse when you're with the baby, she'll still get the immunological and nutritional benefits of breast milk.

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