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Breastfeeding: Steps for Success

Breastfeeding is very good for infants, mothers, and the rest of the family. It is best for the parents to learn as much as possible about feeding their baby breast milk, before giving birth. Many hospitals offer breastfeeding classes with the usual childbirth classes.

Starting to Feed Your Baby

Talk to women who have breastfed well in the past. Experienced mothers can be a great resource because they have been through the process. Those who have been successful will be supportive of your decision to breastfeed. Women who have breastfed can offer tips and share stories about what to expect. Support groups like La Leche League and the African American Breastfeeding Coalition (AABC) are available. To find out about a meeting in your area, call 1-800-LaLeche (1-800-525-3243) or AABC at 1-877-532-8535.

Breastfeed the baby as soon as possible after the baby is born. Begin within the first hour. Even though the mother will not be making enough milk, her breasts contain a thin fluid that helps protect her baby from getting sick. Breastfeeding right away is possible even if a C-section is necessary.

At the hospital, ask to see a lactation consultant. Lactation consultants are health care professionals who specialize in breastfeeding. They can come to your room and show you comfortable feeding positions for you and your baby. They can give advice for latching-on, avoiding sore nipples, and know-

ing when to feed your baby. Take advantage of this service if it is offered.

When to Feed

Feed on demand. Newborns need to eat often. Early signs of hunger are the baby rooting around, sticking his fingers or fist in his mouth, and becoming more alert and physically active. Crying is not the first sign of hunger, and babies cry for many reasons. Look for the early signs of hunger.

Breastfeed at least every 3 hours in the beginning. Many newborns will want to nurse every 1.5 to 2 hours. Breast milk is easier for a baby to digest than formula, so breastfed babies will eat more often than those who feed from a bottle. New babies may nurse 8 to 12 times a day.

Let the baby nurse until satisfied. The baby may nurse for 15–20 minutes at each breast. Try to have the baby nurse from both breasts during feeding. Signs that the baby is satisfied include: turning head away from the breast, having open hands, looking relaxed, and falling asleep.

Volume of Breast Milk

Supply and demand—The more the baby nurses, the more milk the mother will make. To increase the supply of milk, feed more often and longer (if possible). Infant formula given in the first few days can reduce both the baby's hunger and the mother's milk.

Avoid extras like sugar water for the baby. Some babies get confused when a bottle is given to them

early on. Sugar water offers little that is helpful and may make the baby not want to nurse.

Signs Baby is Getting Enough Milk

- Gains weight every week after the first week of birth.
- Has 6–8 wet diapers each day.
- Has 2–5 stools each day at first. The number will decrease over time to 2 stools a day or less.
- Acts satisfied after a feeding.

What to Eat

Women who are breastfeeding need to eat 300–350 extra calories each day. The extra calories are enough to support the energy needed to supply breast milk while returning to your pre-pregnancy weight. Calorie levels will be different depending on the mother's weight and frequency of baby feedings. Use the MyPyramid Plan for Moms (<http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/>) as a guide in selecting healthy food choices.

During nursing, a woman needs to drink more fluids. Drink water to quench thirst. Have water in a convenient location throughout the day. Drink plenty of beverages but limit the intake of added sugars in soda and fruit drink.

Monitor baby's sensitivities. Some infants may be sensitive to foods such as onions and garlic or spicy foods in the mother's diet. If a particular food seems to make the baby uncomfortable (gas and fussiness), the mother can stop eating that food for a few days and see if the problem goes away.

What to Avoid

Use caution if smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking pills. These things will pass into the mother's milk and may cause harm.

Drink no more than 2–3 cups of day of coffee or caffeinated beverages. Remember caffeine will also pass from the mother to the baby. Too much caffeine may make the baby more irritable and feed more frequently. Limit caffeine intake while breastfeeding.

Delay use of plastic nipples. So the baby does not get confused, wait a week or two after the baby is born before giving him or her a pacifier. Plastic nipples require a different sucking action than real ones.

How to Store

You may choose to pump your breast milk so it can be used later. Check with your local hospital, doctor's office, WIC office, or La Leche League for information on breast milk pumps. Label the storage containers with the date the milk was expressed before storing.

Safe Storage Times		
	Refrigerator	Freezer
Breast Milk	2 days	3 to 4 months

Resources

- Food and Drug Administration. (2005). *Feeding Your Baby With Breast Milk or Formula* (Publication No. FDA05-1108C). Washington, DC: U.S.
- Huggins, K. (2005). *The Nursing Mother's Companion*. Boston: Harvard Common Press.

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