Breastfeeding: Steps for Success

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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 in the past or who are presently breastfeeding. Experienced mothers can be a great resource. Local hospitals can have groups for new mothers where you can obtain breastfeeding support. In addition, support groups like La Leche League of Ohio (lllohio.org/groups/index.html) and the Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance (ohiobreastfeedingalliance.org/breastfeedinghelp.html) are also locally available. Breastfeed your baby within the first hour of giving birth. Before the milk starts, you are able to offer your baby a clear fluid called colostrum. This “liquid gold” is full of antibodies and special nutrients that nourish and protect your newborn.

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 1.5–2 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 8–12 times a day. Let the baby nurse until satisfied. Milk composition changes during a feeding; therefore, babies need to nurse for 15–20 minutes at each breast to consume all the nutrients required. Try to have the baby nurse from both breasts during feeding; however, if baby only feeds from one breast, start feeding on the opposite breast on the next feeding. Signs that the baby is satisfied include turning her head away from the breast, having open hands, looking relaxed and falling asleep.

Volume of Breast Milk

The more the baby nurses, the more milk the mother produces. To increase the supply of milk, feed more often and longer (if possible). Infant formula given in the first few weeks can reduce both the baby’s appetite and the mother’s milk production. Breastfeed exclusively up to 6 months of age. During this time, babies do not need anything else but breast milk.

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 the frequency of baby feedings. Use "Nutritional Needs while Breastfeeding" (choosemyplate.gov/pregnancy-breastfeeding/breastfeeding-nutritional-needs.html) 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 drinks.

Monitor baby's sensitivities. Some infants may be sensitive to foods such as onions and garlic, or to 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 to see if the problem goes away.

What to Avoid

Use caution if smoking, drinking alcohol or taking medication. These things will pass into the mother’s milk and may cause harm to the baby.

Limit caffeine intake while breastfeeding by drinking no more than 2–3 cups of coffee or caffeinated beverages a day. Remember, caffeine will also pass from the mother to the baby. Too much caffeine may cause the baby to become irritable or to feed more frequently.

Delay the use of plastic nipples. To avoid nipple confusion, wait 4–6 weeks after the baby is born before offering a pacifier. Plastic nipples require a different sucking action than real nipples.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe Storage Times for Breast Milk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insulated Cooler Bag</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freezer Compartment of Refrigerator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deep Freezer</td>
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Resources

