

Getting Started Breastfeeding Your Baby

Breastmilk is the perfect food for your baby. It is all your baby needs for the first 6 months of life. It can take time to learn how to breastfeed. Be patient. You and your baby are both learning something new.

The first milk your body makes is called colostrum. It is often a thick, creamy yellow. Colostrum is rich in nutrients and antibodies that protect your baby from infections and diseases. Breastmilk changes as your baby grows. It becomes a thin, white liquid that sometimes may even look bluish.

Babies do not need any extra water. Your milk is all they need. Avoid giving your baby bottles, pacifiers or using nipple shields in the first few weeks of life unless directed to do so by a doctor. The more often you breastfeed, the more milk you make. It is normal for babies to breastfeed every 1 to 3 hours in the beginning.

Getting Ready to Breastfeed

Wash your hands and make yourself comfortable. Use pillows to help you hold and support your baby. Some mothers massage their breasts gently before breastfeeding.

Holding Your Baby to Breastfeed

There are several positions you can use to breastfeed your baby. Make sure you have your baby at breast height so that you are not leaning over your baby. Always bring your baby to your breast instead of trying to put your breast into your baby's mouth.

Football and cross cradle holds will provide the best head control for the newborn.

- **Football or Under the Arm Hold**

1. Place your baby on a pillow at your side.
2. Support your breast with 4 fingers below and your thumb above, forming a “C”. Make sure your fingers are behind the areola, the dark area around your nipple.
3. Hold your baby tucked under your arm. Place the palm of your hand on your baby’s upper back, between the shoulder blades. Control your baby’s head at the neck, below the ears.
4. Lift your baby up to your breast.
5. Tickle your baby’s lips with your nipple and wait until your baby’s mouth opens wide.
6. Bring your baby onto your breast.



- **Cross Cradle Hold**

1. Place your baby on a pillow across your lap so he or she faces you at breast level.
2. Support your breast with the hand on that side with your fingers and thumb below to form a “U” shape.
3. Place your baby’s legs under the arm opposite the breast from which he will be feeding.
4. Support your baby’s head and back with your arm and hand your baby’s legs are under.



- **Cradle Hold**

Many mothers find this hold hard at first. It gets easier as your baby gets a little bigger and more skillful at nursing.

1. Place your baby on her side with baby's tummy facing you, using pillows so she is at breast level.
2. Rest your baby's head on your forearm.
3. Support your baby's back and hold her bottom with your hand.



- **Side-Lying Hold**

This hold is also hard at first unless you have help.

1. Make yourself comfortable by lying on the same side as the breast from which you will feed.
2. Use pillows for support.
3. Place your baby on his side facing your breast.
4. Cradle your baby with the base of his head in the bend of your arm.



Latching On

When your baby is positioned and your breast is supported, you are ready for your baby to latch onto your nipple.

- Place your hand under your breast behind the dark area around the nipple called the **areola**. Gently lift the breast. Guide your nipple toward your baby's mouth.
- Tickle your baby's lips with your nipple. Gently squeeze out some milk. Your baby should open his or her mouth wide. Aim the nipple up and back, deep into your baby's mouth.

- When your baby opens her mouth wide like a yawn, pull your baby closer. This allows you to help your baby get as much of the areola inside your baby's mouth.
- Hold your baby's body against your stomach with the tip of your baby's nose and chin next to your breast. Continue to hold your breast to support its weight and to prevent your nipple from falling out of your baby's mouth.
- Burp your baby before switching to your other breast. For the next feeding, start on the side you ended with at the last feeding.

How often should I breastfeed?

Breastfeed every 2 to 3 hours during the day so that your baby may not wake as often during the night for feedings. Fewer day feedings mean that your baby will need more feedings at night. During the first 3 months, babies need to feed 8 to 10 times in a 24-hour period. Breastfeeding often helps you make more milk and prevents your breasts from becoming overfull or engorged.

How soon should I breastfeed after my baby is born?

Breastfeed right after delivery if possible. Continue to breastfeed your baby every 2 to 3 hours even if your milk has not come in or you do not have a lot of milk yet. In the early days of life, breastfeeding is very important. Practice times together help you and your baby get to know one another. Be patient with yourself and your baby.

How long should I breastfeed my baby?

Most babies will breastfeed for about 15 to 20 minutes the first 24 to 48 hours. After this time, the baby may want to breastfeed for 20 minutes on one breast and continue for up to 20 minutes on the second breast. Let your baby, rather than the clock, decide when he is finished.

Helpful tips:

- Breastfeed your baby on the first breast until he is done. The baby may slow down and comfort suck, release the nipple or start to fall asleep with the nipple resting in his mouth.
- Burp your baby and offer your other breast.
- Some babies breastfeed on both breasts at each feeding, while others may breastfeed on only one. If your baby takes the second breast, let your baby breastfeed on the second breast until he is finished.
- When finished, your baby will act full, relaxed and content.



How do I take my baby off my breast?

Taking your baby off your breast or breaking the suction of your baby's tongue may be done in two ways:

- Insert your finger in the corner of your baby's mouth, between your baby's gums.
- Curl your baby's lower lip over his lower gum until you feel your baby's tongue release your nipple. Then remove your baby's head away from your breast gently.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough to eat?

Your body makes as much milk as your baby needs. If you breastfeed every 2 to 3 hours for 20 minutes on each breast, your body will produce more than enough milk for your baby. If your baby is getting enough milk, your breasts will be full with milk, soft after feedings and refill between feedings. Your baby will:

- Have 6 or more wet diapers in a 24 hour period
- Sleep between feedings

- Have more than 2 bowel movements each day
- Gain weight

Call your baby's doctor, clinic or a Lactation Specialist for help if you think your baby is not getting enough to eat.

2/2008. Developed through a partnership of The Ohio State University Medical Center, Mount Carmel Health and OhioHealth, Columbus, Ohio. Available for use as a public service without copyright restrictions at www.healthinfotranslations.org.