

Common Questions About Breastfeeding

Q: Will I have enough milk for my baby?

A: Yes! The more you breastfeed, the more milk you will make. As your baby grows, your supply of breastmilk will adjust to meet your baby's needs. The size of your breasts does not matter; your breasts can make milk.

Q: How can I tell if my baby is getting enough breast milk?

A: By the time your baby is 5 days old, you should be nursing about every 1½ to 3 hours. This ends up being about 8-12 times over 24 hours. Baby should wet about 6 or more regular diapers and have 2-5 dirty diapers every day. Your baby should be quiet and happy after feeding, and be back to birth weight by 2 weeks after birth. (See LaLeche League International getting enough milk)

Q: What does breastmilk look like?

A: Your first milk, Colostrum, looks thick and yellowish. In the first week after birth, your milk starts to look whiter. At the beginning of feeding, breastmilk can look thin and watery. Later in the feeding, breastmilk looks thicker and creamy.

Q: What does it mean when my baby suddenly wants to breastfeed more often?

A: Babies go through growth spurts and may breastfeed more often for a day or two. Growth spurts typically happen at about 10 days, 2-3 weeks, 6-8 weeks, 3 months and 6 months. During a growth spurt, baby may want to nurse both breasts at each feeding. If baby still seems hungry after the second side, offer the first breast again. Even if your breast doesn't seem full, there is milk there! Providing a bottle of formula isn't beneficial since your breast will not get the message to make more milk. (LaLeche League International on frequent breastfeeding)

Q: Why should I start breastfeeding when I know I probably won't continue?

A: Even breastfeeding your baby for just a few days is good for both of you. Colostrum, your first milk, is a rich fluid full of antibodies and protein that help protect your baby's tender insides.

Q: What about nursing in public?

A: No one has to know you are nursing. A blanket thrown over your shoulder or a loose blouse that pulls up from the waist will cover you. With a little practice (try practicing in front of a mirror at home), you can learn how to breastfeed so that no one notices. (LaLeche League International Discreet breastfeeding). Kentucky has passed laws protecting women who wish to breastfeed in public. The law allows a woman to breastfeed in any location she is allowed to be.

Q: How can my baby's father share in the feedings?

A: He can bring the baby to you for nursing, share those loving moments with both of you, and then return the baby to the crib. Dad needs to know that he is important in caring for the new baby in lots of ways — he can cuddle, bathe, rock, walk, diaper, play with and burp the baby. (Fathers and Breastfeeding)

Q: Can I still breastfeed if I smoke?

A: Yes. Nicotine can decrease your milk supply, especially if you are taking estrogen birth control pills. Most important is that no one smokes around the baby. Cigarette smoke can lead to breathing problems

for your baby. Even the smoke on your clothes will affect your baby. If you were able to cut down on smoking during your pregnancy, maybe this is a good time to quit! You may find breastfeeding and cuddling with your baby more relaxing than having a cigarette!

(LaLeche League International Smoking & Breastfeeding)

Q: May I have a few alcoholic drinks at a party or special occasion?

A: Alcohol can pass into your breastmilk, and so into your baby. Breastfeed before you drink and wait at least 2 hours after drinking or breastfeed the baby. Have expressed breast milk to feed baby while you are at the party and overnight. Drink responsibly — remember that you have a baby depending on you!

(LaLeche League International Alcohol & Breastfeeding)

Q: Can I drink things that have caffeine, like soda, tea, and coffee?

A: Caffeine can pass into your breastmilk. Small amounts of caffeine usually do not affect the baby. If your baby gets fussy or jittery and does not sleep well, try cutting back on caffeine. Chocolate and some medications have caffeine, too.

Q: Will breastfeeding affect my figure?

A: Breastfeeding helps your body get back in shape. It shrinks your uterus and flattens your tummy. It burns extra calories so you can lose weight after your pregnancy.

Q: Will I have to watch what I eat?

A: Everybody needs to eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, grains, proteins, and dairy foods. Flavors and other ingredients in foods often pass into breastmilk. Lots of babies like these different tastes. Some babies can get unusually fussy after their moms have eaten certain foods. If you notice a pattern of baby being fussy about 6 hours after you've eaten a certain food, you might want to cut back on that food.

Q: Do I have to drink milk to make milk?

A: NO. Making breastmilk does take calcium, so it is a good idea to get plenty in the foods you eat and drink. You can get calcium in yogurt, cheese, green leafy vegetables, tofu and enriched soymilk. Vitamin pills usually have calcium, too.

Q: Do I have to drink a lot of water when I breastfeed?

A: Not necessarily. You might feel thirstier while you are breastfeeding. Besides plain water, consider herbal tea and water with some juice. Drinks that have caffeine, like coffee, black tea, and sodas, can sometimes make you even thirstier.

Q: What about my job or school?

A: You can breastfeed when you go back to work or school. Express your milk while you are away and breastfeed when you are with your baby. The milk you express one day can be fed to baby the next day. (working and breastfeeding)

(Breastfeeding.com)

Q: Is rest important?

A: Yes! You need to take care of yourself in order to take care of your baby. Nap when the baby naps. Get friends or family members to help with household chores. Cut back on other activities or projects. Go to bed early.

Q: When can I give my baby a bottle?

A: It is best to wait until your baby has learned how to breastfeed and your body is making plenty of milk, usually 3-4 weeks after birth. Sometimes babies have a hard time going back to the breast if the bottle is given too soon. Consider pumping your milk for baby's bottles so you can keep your milk supply high. The older baby might even go straight to a cup. Since baby expects to breastfeed with mom, let someone else teach baby how to take a bottle or cup, like Dad, Grandma or your sitter.
(LaLeche League International Baby feeding on a bottle)

Q: Can I use a pacifier?

A: Just like a bottle, babies suck differently on a pacifier than on the breast. In the early weeks, breastfeed when baby is fussy or wants to suck- maybe baby is hungry or needs to be comforted. After breastfeeding is going well, around 3-4weeks after birth, it is okay to offer a pacifier.

Q: How long should each feeding be?

A: Each nursing session typically lasts between 15 and 30 minutes. Watch your baby: you will see little sucks at the beginning, followed by bigger sucks and gulps. Babies usually let go of the breast when they are done. Let baby finish on the first breast before offering the second.

What do I do when my breasts are very firm and swollen?

When your milk first comes in, your body makes more milk than baby needs. Use warm washcloths or a shower to soften your breasts, and gently massage them. Express out a little milk if it is hard for baby to latch on. Nurse baby every 2 hours around the clock for the next day or two after delivery. Use a cold compress (washcloth or icepack) on the breasts after each feeding. This will help your body quickly figure out how much milk to make and help you feel more comfortable.

Q: What is "nipple confusion"?

A: Babies learn quickly that a certain feeling in their mouths means food is coming. Breasts and bottle nipples or pacifiers feel very different in a baby's mouth -- bottle nipples and a pacifier feels harder and more solid. When a baby gets used to the hard, solid feeling of a bottle nipple or pacifier, they sometimes have trouble recognizing the softer feeling of a breast. In the first few weeks, avoid the problem by not using bottles or pacifiers. After the baby is 3-4 weeks old and breastfeeding is going well, then give them a try.

Q: When will my baby sleep through the night?

A: Whether your baby is breastfed or formula fed, chances are you will be up during the night to feed. Actually, it is good for babies to eat during the night – their tiny bodies need the energy. If your baby sleeps near by, like in a crib in your room, you will not have to travel so far for the feeding and can get back to sleep faster. Do not give your baby cereal in a bottle – it is hard to digest, can promote food allergies, and often makes baby overeat. To catch up on sleep, nap when your baby naps.
(LaLeche League International sleeping through the night)

Q: What if I leak breast milk?

A: Most new mothers leak. You will leak less over time. When you start to leak, press your hand firmly on your nipple area. Wear nursing pads without plastic backing inside your bra to absorb leaked milk. Wear clothing in layers or with bold patterns so that leaks do not show. (LaLeche League FOA on breast pumps.)