



## WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE EARLY DAYS OF BREASTFEEDING

### Is it Important to Breastfeed My Baby?

Breastfeeding is a wonderful way to care for your baby. Breast milk is perfect food for babies. It has all the right nutrients in just the right amounts. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that feeding your baby only breast milk for the first 6 months its life is the best way to keep your baby healthy. WHO suggests continuing breastfeeding along with other foods for the second 6 months.

### How Can I Tell if I'm Making Enough Milk?

Right after your baby's birth, you will have a special type of breast milk called "colostrum" which is very rich. Colostrum is all the food your new baby needs. If you are breastfeeding your baby often during the first 2 days, about 3 to 4 days after your baby's birth your regular breast milk will "come in." Your breasts will feel fuller at this time.

One of the best ways to tell that you have enough milk is how often your baby has a bowel movement. After your milk comes in, your baby should have more than 4 bowel movements every day.

Weight gain is another good way to tell that your baby is getting enough milk. It is normal for babies to lose weight in the first few days after birth. But your baby should gain weight after your milk comes in.

### My Milk Looks Thin and Watery—Almost Blue. Is That Normal?

Yes. Human breast milk is not like cow's milk. Your breast milk has a better mix of fat and proteins, which is perfect for human babies!

### Is There Anything I Can Do to Make Lots of Milk?

The more you breastfeed, the more milk you will have. At first, you will probably need to breastfeed your baby 10 or 12 times every 24 hours. This will give your body the message to make lots of milk.

### How Will I Know if My Baby is Hungry?

Watch your baby to learn the signals that say, "Feed me." When you see your baby do these things, offer your baby your breast:

- Moving her hands near her mouth
- Clenching his fists
- Making sucking motions with her mouth
- Rooting (turning his head and mouth toward something that strokes his face)

Do not wait until the baby cries to start a feeding. A great time to offer your baby the breast is just as the baby is waking up.

### What if Breastfeeding is Uncomfortable?

If you are having pain or any other problems with breastfeeding, get help right away. Some sources of help include:

- Your health care provider or the baby's health care provider
- A lactation specialist. Many hospitals have these special care providers on staff.
- Your local chapter of La Leche League. These groups of women help each other with breastfeeding.

## What to Expect

### Right After Birth

- Holding your baby skin-to-skin is the best way to start breastfeeding. Skin-to-skin contact helps smooth out the baby's heartbeat and breathing rate. Your baby should be wearing nothing but a hat and a diaper.
- Many babies will begin to look for the breast within the first hour after birth. Move your baby close to the breast to help him or her latch on.
- Breastfeeding should not be painful. If the first feeding causes pain, ask for help.
- Just after birth, it is very common for babies and mothers to be wide awake for a few hours, and then to have a long, restful sleep. This sleep helps you and the baby to recover.

### The First Few Days

- Many babies are very sleepy in the first few days. You may need to wake your baby to feed. Your baby should be awakened to breastfeed if he sleeps more than 4 hours.
- Your milk will probably "come in" about 3 to 4 days after your baby's birth. Your breasts will fill with milk, and you may even leak milk through your clothes. You may also feel a bit weepy at this time: these are normal changes after birth!

### The First 4 to 6 Weeks

- After your milk comes in, your baby will probably want to feed 10 to 12 times in 24 hours.
- Every baby is different. Some babies may need to feed more often. Others may be able to go longer between feedings.
- Lots of women feel like all they do in the first weeks is breastfeed. It takes a while for moms and babies to get nursing down. However, if feedings take a long time, seek help.
- Try to make your life a bit easier during this time. Carrying your baby in a sling or pouch, and keeping the baby's bed near your own will allow you to move around and sleep more easily. Ask family and friends to help with food and house chores. Get help so you can focus on your baby and not worry about anything else.
- By 6 to 8 weeks, you will find that you and your baby have gotten into a rhythm. Your baby will usually be able to go longer between feedings. You will begin to get more sleep. And your baby will begin to smile!

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Baby-Friendly USA Website:

[www.babyfriendlyusa.org](http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org)

Info for Parents has good information on starting breastfeeding in the hospital and links to other useful information.

La Leche League Website:

[www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org)

Great information and resources for starting and continuing breastfeeding.

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