



Breast-Feeding

There are many reasons to choose breast-feeding:

- It builds your baby's immunities during the important first weeks.
- It helps prevent allergies in your baby.
- It provides a wonderful opportunity for mother and baby to bond.
- It causes contractions that help shrink your uterus back to normal size and helps you lose weight.
- There's some evidence that women who breast-feed have a lower incidence of breast cancer.
- There are no bottles or formula to prepare.

The First Milk

The first few days after giving birth, the milk coming from your breasts is a thin, orange-yellow liquid called colostrum. It contains more protein, salt and antibodies than regular breast milk. Within a few days, your milk will come in. This is sometimes called the "let-down reflex." Once this happens, your breasts will fill with milk and possibly become engorged, which can be uncomfortable. The best solution for engorgement is for your baby to nurse. If she's not hungry enough to ease the engorgement or she has trouble latching on, you can hand express some milk yourself to lessen the pressure. You can also do this once the baby is latched on to encourage her to drink more. To express milk:

- Place your thumb at the top of the areola, with your fingers underneath.
- Squeeze the edges of the areola as you press back toward your chest wall, in a milking motion.

Tips for Successful Breast-Feeding

- Sit in a comfortable chair that supports your back and arms.
- Position your baby so her whole body squarely faces your breast and her mouth is wide open, not biting.
- Play soothing music and sip a nutritious drink during feedings.
- Try to find a quiet spot for breast-feeding so you can enjoy undisturbed feedings.
- Alternate the breasts each time you begin feedings. The first breast always gets sucked more vigorously.
- If you have problems getting your baby to latch on, call your doctor or local breast-feeding support group for help.
- Avoid smoking, drinking alcohol and using illegal drugs, which can interfere with the let-down reflex and can pass through the milk to your baby.



Mom's Diet

- Keep your milk supply rich by eating nutritious foods, drinking extra water and nonfat milk and using low-fat food-preparation methods such as baking, steaming and broiling.
- Avoid cabbage, onions, garlic, broccoli, turnips, chocolate, caffeinated drinks and other foods that can cause gas in your baby.
- Check with your doctor before taking any over-the-counter or prescription medications. Many medications pass through the breast milk to your baby and can be potentially harmful.

Nipple and Breast Care

Mastitis—an infection of the breast caused by bacteria within the duct system. Symptoms are swelling, heat, pain and possibly fever. Notify your doctor if you have a fever or a lump that doesn't go away. Apply hot compresses and massage your breasts before feeding.

Cracked nipples—can occur if your baby is not latching on properly. Try these tips:

- After nursing, rinse your nipples and expose them to air, or dry them with a hair dryer.
- Express a small amount of milk and let it dry on the nipple. This will create a protective coating that may help.
- Never use soap on your breasts while you're breast-feeding. Creams and lotions may also aggravate the problem.
- Try varying your baby's position at each feeding and limit feedings to five or 10 minutes.
- Avoid plastic bra shields or plastic-lined nursing pads.
- Consult your doctor if nipple discomfort persists.

Breast-Feeding on the Go

Many states have adopted laws that make it legal and more acceptable to breast-feed in public. Some discretion and privacy may be called for. For your own privacy, lay a blanket over your shoulder to hang down and shield your open blouse. When you're out, it's wise to keep a supply of breast pads with you to take care of leaks.

Pumping

It may be necessary for you to pump if you're ever away from your baby during a feeding time. Many working women pump their breasts during the day, so the caregiver can feed the baby breast milk. You can get milk from your breast by using a manual pump or an electric pump. The newer electric pumps are gentler on the breasts and faster than pumping by hand.