

Congratulations!

Nursing your baby can be a wonderful and enriching experience. While everyone has the same goal—a happy well-fed baby, there are many paths that can lead to the same destination. The key is to find what works best for you and your baby.



Getting ready

Can I do this?—Many of us worry about our ability to breastfeed and if there will be enough milk. It's perfectly normal to be concerned; after all, this is a new skill. Most of us need practice before it becomes easier. Most women can and do produce plenty of milk. This guide will help with information and suggestions to get you started and to help with common concerns and questions.

Each woman is different—The way each baby breastfeeds is also unique. Your personality and life experiences, as well as your child's temperament, weight, and health will influence your breastfeeding.

The benefits of breastfeeding—Breast milk provides babies with the perfect combination of nutrients that help them grow and develop. It needs no special preparation, is readily available, and provides antibodies that help protect against infections. Moms also benefit by helping the uterus contract, with weight loss. Sitting down to nurse ensures that mom is getting some time off her feet.

The first days

Before your milk comes in your breasts produce a thick, yellow fluid, or first milk known as Colostrum. This is a rich source of nourishment from protein, fat, minerals, milk sugar (lactose), and antibodies that help protect the baby from infection.

Colostrum—Is less than 1 ounce per feeding. In the first days, baby's stomach is about the size of a marble, so this is the perfect amount for them.

Nurse frequently—This is especially important in the first few days. Aim for every 2 - 3 hours. The time interval starts from the beginning of a breastfeeding session to the beginning of the next.

Frequent nursing will:

- Stimulate further milk production.
- Help lessen or prevent engorgement when the milk does come in.
- Help the baby clear their meconium (the dark, sticky, tarry first stool).
- Provide nourishment and antibodies.
- Provide lots of practice for mom and baby.

You'll notice:

Engorged breasts—As the colostrum decreases and your milk "comes in," your breasts may become enlarged, swollen, and hard.

Pelvic cramping—Nursing stimulates uterine contractions.

Tingling breasts—The let-down reflex may feel like a tingling or burning sensation. Many first time moms do not feel anything, others may notice mild to extreme pain. Some women experience the let down occasionally and others each time they nurse.

Baby's weight loss—Even though babies drink colostrum, most will lose about 10% of their body weight in the first few days. This is perfectly normal and expected. They will regain their weight in the next 1 - 2 weeks.

Sleepy baby

Some babies sleep as little as 8 hours or as much as 22 hours each day. Sleepy babies may be hard to wake, nurse less than 10 times/day, and fall asleep at the breast. Your breasts may become engorged from incomplete emptying.

Ways to wake the baby:

- Unwrap blankets or undress her if it's too warm.
- Change her diaper, make eye contact, and talk to her.
- Hold her in a sitting or upright position.
- Gently rub her feet, arms, back, or tummy.
- Gently blow on, or pat her forehead with a cool, damp cloth.
- Wipe some milk onto her lips from your nipple or your finger.

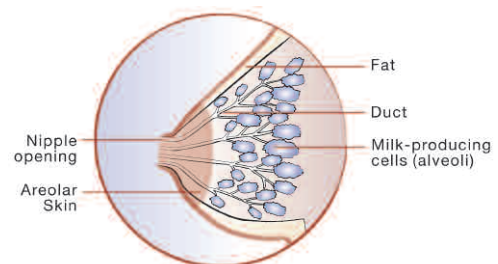
Your breasts

Your breasts—Contain clusters of milk-producing cells known as alveoli. The milk travels down the ducts and collects in the milk sinuses, which are just beneath the areola (dark area that surrounds the nipple).

The baby's mouth—Must be positioned over the areola to stimulate the milk to eject through the sinuses and the many tiny openings in the nipple. Pressure on the areola from sucking or pumping is essential for stimulating more milk production.

Foremilk—The milk that's released when a baby starts to nurse. This has a low concentration of fat. As the baby continues to nurse the amount of fat increases gradually.

Hindmilk—Has a higher fat concentration than the early, foremilk. Babies who get a full feeding with plenty of rich hindmilk can go longer between feedings. This is why it's important to nurse for at least 8 - 10 minutes and try to empty your breasts. Some baby's will be satisfied nursing from just one side.



Try to rest as much as possible.