

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 of the right nutrients in just the right amounts. The World Health Organization (WHO) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) say that feeding your baby only breast milk for the first 6 months of life is the best way to keep your baby healthy. WHO and AAP also recommend continuing breastfeeding along with other foods from 6 to 12 months and beyond.

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

You probably are! Humans are mammals, and your breasts are your mammary glands. During pregnancy, your body prepared them to feed your baby.

Right after your baby's birth, you will have a special type of breast milk called "colostrum" which is full of nutrients for your baby. Colostrum is all the food your new baby needs. If you are breastfeeding your baby often during the first 2 days, then usually about 3 to 5 days after your baby's birth your regular breast milk will "come in." Your breasts may feel fuller at this time.

One of the best ways to tell that you have enough milk is to track your baby's diapers. After your milk comes in, your baby should have at least 4 dirty diapers and 6 wet diapers every day. When your baby's dirty diapers turn yellow this is also a good sign that your milk has come in.

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 start gaining weight after your milk comes in. It may take up to 2 weeks for babies to get back to their birth weight.

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 the best mix of fat and proteins 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 to 12 times every 24 hours. Don't be surprised if feedings are not spaced evenly, babies may feed very frequently, which is called cluster feeding. 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:

- Starting to wake
- Moving his/her hands near his/her mouth
- Clenching his/her fists
- Making sucking motions with his/her mouth
- Rooting (turning his/her head and mouth toward something that strokes his/her face)
- Do not wait until the baby cries to start a feeding.
- If your baby is not waking to feed at least 10-12 times in a 24 hour period, mom will need to wake baby and initiate feeds. Babies should feed at least every 2 to 3 hours, and should never go more than 4 hours without feeding.

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 consultant. Many hospitals have these special care providers on staff, as well as out-patient appointments following discharge
- WSNM Lactation Line 505.843.6168 x 7859.
- 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 diaper. You can both be covered by a sheet or light blanket, if you wish.
- Many babies will follow his/her instincts to begin to look for the breast within the first hour after birth. When baby begins rooting (moving his hands or face around on your skin), hold your baby so her face is close to the nipple. Your nipple touching her lips will cause her to open her mouth and latch. It may take several tries, try to stay relaxed and be patient.
- Though you may feel tugging or pulling, breastfeeding should not be painful. If you experience pain that increases during feedings or from each feeding to the next, 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. If you have a sleepy baby, you might try dimming the lights so they are not squinting; resume skin to skin contact; and do breast compressions any time you see baby's sucking slow down once they are latched.
- 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.
- Your hormones are rapidly changing to allow your body to continue to care for your baby. 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 continue 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. Every mother and baby are a pair. Typically, babies who feed when they show feeding cues, rather than on a schedule, make mom make enough milk.
- Lots of women feel like all they do in the first few weeks is breastfeed. It may take a while for moms and babies to feel that latch is easy, and feeding need to be frequent to build mom's milk supply. However, if feedings always 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!

Resources

WSNM Lactation Support:

Lactation Line: 505.843.6168 x 7857 messages can be left 24 hours, checked daily Monday-Friday business hours

Presbyterian Breastfeeding Support Services: 505-841-1773

Certified Lactation Consultants will be happy to help you. Help is available by phone or by a scheduled appointment. Clinic services can be billed to your insurance. A lactation support group is also available.

Women's Hospital Lactation Support Services: 505-727-6797

Certified Lactation Consultants will be happy to help you. Help is available by phone or by a scheduled appointment. Clinic services can be billed to your insurance. A new parents support group is also available.

La Leche League: www.lalecheleague.org

Great information and resources for starting and continuing breastfeeding. Call 505-821-2511 for information about breastfeeding and meetings. Asistencia en español: Cindy 505-507-5264, 9am-7pm
Closed facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/LLLABq/?fref=ts>

Albuquerque Birth Network: List of some breastfeeding support/lactation services:

<http://www.albuquerquebirthnetwork.org/index.html>

Kellymom.com

Becomingmamas.com

Babywearinginternational.org

Breastfeeding Supplies

- Breastfeeding Resources: 505-293-5215 – www.abqbr.com Weekly, monthly and long term Medela Symphony hospital grade breast pump rental rates.
- Babies 'R' Us: 45 Hotel Circle: 505-292-9909
- BuyBuy Baby: 2451 San Mateo Blvd NE 505.881.2179
- Target: nipple shields, basic pumps
- The Herb Store: 107 Carlisle Blvd. SE : 505-255-8878
- La Montanita Food Co-op, Sprouts, Whole Foods: teas, tinctures