



What to expect during breastfeeding

Share your breastfeeding goals with the delivery team

It's best to breastfeed as soon as possible after birth, preferably within the first hour. The first milk, colostrum, is rich in proteins, vitamins, minerals and antibodies for your baby's developing immune system. The initial couple of weeks of breastfeeding can be a big adjustment as you and your baby learn how to work together, but it will get better over time. Contact your lactation consultant or doctor if you experience persistent pain or if you have any trouble with your supply.

The benefits of skin-to-skin contact

Skin-to-skin, also known as "kangaroo care," has benefits for mother and child. Practice laying your baby on your chest so that you are bare-chest to bare-chest to support stabilization of your baby's body temperature. This contact can help improve baby's breathing and deep sleep patterns, plus it decreases your stress response and increases your milk supply.

Early signs of hunger and breastfeeding

Don't watch the clock, rather pay attention to your baby's cues and feed at the first sign of hunger—an awake, alert baby smacking lips—for a calmer feeding experience. A newborn baby should breastfeed at least 8 to 12 times during a 24-hour period.

How to establish a good milk supply

Each breast is independent of the other and will need to be nursed for optimal production. Establish a full milk supply during the first 4-6 weeks by alternating which breast is offered to start each feeding. Allow your baby to feed on the first breast contently until satisfied then watch for resumed alertness before offering the second breast to top off. Your breasts should feel a relief from fullness after each breastfeeding session during these crucial first weeks.

Why breastmilk only is the way to go

Your milk supply will be established based on how much and how often your baby receives full breastfeedings. Because any skipped feedings will tell your body that your baby did not need to be fed, bottles and pacifiers should be held off for at least the first 3 to 4 weeks and formula should be avoided if possible.

Breastmilk changes to expect

Breastmilk adapts to your baby's evolving needs. Colostrum, known as "first milk," is a yellowish or creamy color and thicker than "transitional milk" which lasts about 2 weeks and has more calories, fat and vitamins to keep up with your baby's needs. "Mature milk" is the final, ongoing milk, and has a higher water content for hydration, along with the right balance of protein, fats and carbohydrates for your baby's growth.

How to maintain a healthy milk supply

To keep a healthy milk supply, respond to your baby's hunger cues and feed her on demand. Allow her to feed as long as she wants from each breast. This will allow her to get the fattier hind milk at the end of the feeding.

An empty breast will trigger your body to produce more milk for the next feeding, so if your baby isn't emptying your breast, you can pump after she feeds or between feedings. Try to give at least an hour between pumping and the next feeding to allow for milk production.

Burping your breastfed baby

It's important to give your baby the opportunity to burp after they release your breast, but don't be alarmed if it doesn't happen. Breastfed babies swallow less air and so usually have less need to burp, though it is always good to try.

Your breastfed baby's diaper

Breastmilk helps your baby produce regular stools and clear out the meconium, your newborn's earliest stool resulting from what they ingested during pregnancy. Within the first 48 hours they'll produce tarry black stools. One stool

within the first 24 hours then two stools the next day is typical. By the third day, expect to change three diapers or more each day. Three or more yellow seedy stools, each day, during the first 4 to 6 weeks is a good sign of a well breastfed baby.

Keeping up your energy while breastfeeding

Breastfeeding requires more energy from you. You'll need about 500 extra calories each day to keep up with the demands of producing milk. Use those calories wisely by adding nutrient dense foods to your diet, and stay hydrated. Find out more in: [Nutrition for breastfeeding.](#)

Ask for help if you need it

Try to max out the resources offered at the hospital by talking to nurses and lactation consultants then. No matter the challenges, don't give up, and don't be worried about calling your doctor or lactation consultant with questions and concerns.