

For further information or assistance with breastfeeding call:



**** This pamphlet was printed with the permission of Headwaters Breastfeeding Clinic, Calgary, AB.**

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Learning to Breastfeed

Helpful Tips!



“The newborn baby has only three demands. They are warmth in the arms of its mother, food from her breast, and security in the knowledge of her presence. Breastfeeding satisfies all three”

Dr. Grantly Dick-Read

Congratulations for choosing to breastfeed your baby!!

- Breast milk is the most precious gift a mother can give to her child.
- Breastfeeding is a learned art.

Both mother and baby need to learn how to breastfeed. It often takes four to six weeks to feel confident about breastfeeding. Don't hesitate to ask for help as many times as you feel you need it. Some of the most common questions you may have while you are learning to breastfeed might be...

When can I start to breastfeed?

- Most babies are ready to breastfeed within the first few hours after birth
- Colostrum, your first milk, is baby's first food after birth and is very important to your baby. It provides energy, prevents infant jaundice and is baby's first protection from infection.

How do I ensure a good latch?

Getting ready to breastfeed:

- Go to the bathroom; wash your hands;
- Have a drink or a snack close by;
- Ensure privacy– take a quiet moment to relax;
- Use pillows to help you sit up or lie in a relaxed position with your back and arms well supported; and
- Rest your feet on a foot stool.

Your baby will learn to latch. Learning to latch takes time and practice. Be patient and ask for help whenever you need it. Your baby needs to latch well for you to feel comfortable and for you to see that the baby is sucking and swallow-

Basic principles for positioning to ensure a good latch:

- Remove baby's blankets;
- Position your baby *close* to you–tummy to tummy;
- Place your baby so their mouth is level with your nipple;
- Cup your breast with your hand, thumb resting on top and the other fingers underneath well back from the areola. Lift the breast near your ribs;
- Tip your baby's head back slightly– “chin up”; and
- Touch his lips with your nipple and wait for the baby to open his mouth wide like a yawn. Wait for him to hold it open before bringing him into the breast. Direct your nipple to the top of your infant's mouth. **Bring the baby to you rather than your breast to the baby.**



Babies breastfeed, not nipple feed!

Your baby needs a good mouthful of nipple and breast to be able to get your milk effectively. There should be no pain. Some mothers experience nipple tenderness from stretching which can be compared to a mild sun burn.

How often does my baby need to feed?

Although your breasts are soft for the first few days after birth, they are producing small amounts of rich colostrum which is enough to meet your baby's needs at this time.

Frequent feedings are important.

Breast milk is digested in less than two hours. Offer the breast whenever your baby shows interest.

- After the initial feeding at birth, baby should want to feed at least another 4-6 times in the first 24 hours of life.

- Baby should be more interested in breastfeeding on the second day and should breastfeed **8-12 times every 24 hours**.

- Let your baby be the guide how often and how long to nurse. This is usually every 2-3 hours or more during the day and at least 1 or 2 times per night.

- Frequent, effective feedings prevent breast over fullness for mother.



Knowing your baby...

Keeping your baby near you both day and night gives you time to learn your baby's feeding cues such as stretching, stirring, rapid eye movements, hand to mouth activity, rooting, licking sucking and waking.

Crying is the last cue to feed—then you may have to calm the baby in order to help him to focus to breastfeed.

The baby is adjusting to being out of the womb and may also need you for comfort to settle. Having your baby nearby and the closeness of breastfeeding will help you get to know your baby better than anyone else. Knowing your baby will help you choose what is right for your baby.

How long will a feeding take?

Watch your baby, not the clock:

- Listen to hear that your baby swallows after a few minutes of sucking. This tells you that your milk is flowing.

- Most babies need both breasts per feeding. Breastfeed as long as baby is swallowing on one breast and then when baby slows down or comes off, offer the second breast.

- When your baby stops swallowing he may need to be burped or changed

“After you burp and change, go back to the breast for dessert”.

- It is normal for your baby to “**cluster feed**”. This means several nursings close together which may be followed by a sleep stretch. This usually happens in the evenings prior to bedtime.

Is my baby getting enough?

The output in your baby's diaper is a reflection of how well your baby is breastfeeding:

Day after birth	# of feeds in 24hrs	Minimum # wet diapers	Minimum # soiled diapers	Breasts feel
1	4-6	1	1 black	soft
2	8-12	2	1-2 brown	soft
3	8-12	3 “heavy”	1-2 brown	fullness
4	8-12	4-6 “heavy”	2 yellow “seedy” very loose	Fullness—soft after feeds
5+	8-12	6+ “heavy” colourless odourless	3 or more yellow, seedy stool	Your milk is flowing
After 6 week	8-12	6+	Varies—ensure baby is gaining weight	Soft unless miss several feedings

Around six weeks actual feeding time may shorten, frequency of breastfeeding may stay the same or the baby may cluster feed regularly and sleep one longer stretch afterwards. Average weight gain per week is 120-210 grams or 4-7 ounces.

When should I get further help?

If baby:

- will not go to the breast;
- will only take a few sucks then falls asleep;
- has less than 4-6 heavy wet diapers in 24 hours (day 4 onward);
- feeds less than 8 times in 24 hours (day 3 onwards);
- feeds more than 12 times in 24 hours;
- will not wake to feed; is very sleepy; and
- has not regained birth weight by two weeks of age.

If mother:

- does not feel any breast fullness (day 4 onwards);
- has painful nipples;
- has cracked or bleeding nipples;
- does not hear swallowing when baby first feeds (day 3 onwards); and
- has hard painful breasts that baby can not latch onto.

