

The First Ten Days of Nursing

DAY 1

Some babies nurse well at the breast right from birth. Others don't. If your baby doesn't, ask a lactation nurse for help. Be patient. It won't take long. While at the hospital...



Request "no bottles please."

Giving bottles makes nursing more difficult. Babies learn a different way of eating right from the start and may not nurse well at the breast. Wait 2 to 4 weeks before using a bottle. Pacifiers may also be a problem if your baby is not nursing well or has a weak suck. Wait a few weeks before using one.

Nurse your baby within the first hour or two after birth, if possible. Give plenty of skin-to-skin.

The sooner your baby nurses, the quicker he learns to nurse well. Feed your baby after delivery when he is most alert. Giving lots of skin-to-skin contact also helps baby to latch on well. Epidurals and pain medication can make babies sleepy and less willing to nurse. The more often you receive pain medication during labor and the earlier you begin receiving it, the more sleepy it can make the baby.

Feed your baby at least 6 times during the first 24 hours after birth.

After birth, your baby will be alert for about 2 hours and then sleep for 6 hours or so. This is normal. Both you and baby need it! After this sleep period, start nursing about every 3 hours. Wake him to nurse if he goes longer than 3 hours between feeds. If your baby is unable to nurse at the breast right away, begin pumping to maintain your milk supply and feed the baby until baby is able to nurse.

Nurse your baby when he first begins to wake up. Don't wait for him to start crying.

A crying baby may have a harder time latching onto the breast than a calm baby. Keep your baby in the room with you so you can respond to these early waking signs:

- ♥ Baby opens mouth wide.
- ♥ Baby's eyelids move rapidly.
- ♥ Baby wiggles and makes little sounds.
- ♥ Baby puts hand into mouth.

Your first milk, called colostrum, is produced in very small amounts.

The first feeds will only be a few drops to a teaspoon, just the right amount for a tiny newborn belly. Colostrum is your baby's first immunization and helps protect against infections. It is so rich and healthy that small amounts are all your baby needs. Colostrum may look thick and yellowish, which is normal.

DAYS 2-3

How often should I nurse?

Nurse your baby 8-12 times each 24 hours. Respond to his early feeding cues. Wake your baby to nurse if he waits more than 3 hours during the day or 5 hours at night to eat.

How can I tell my baby is getting enough to eat?

Keep track of the dirty diapers. They will look tarry-black and greenish at first and then turn a lighter yellowish color between day 3 to 5. The gradual color change is a good sign that your baby is getting enough and it helps prevent jaundice. By day 5 the poops should be loose and yellow. Yellow poops = enough milk!

Is it normal to feel some discomfort when nursing?

You may feel something like period cramps while nursing. This is normal. Nursing helps to shrink your uterus and flatten your stomach. It should only last a few days. Your nipples may also be tender. This also should go away in a few days. There might be a strong tug, but the discomfort should not be severe. If it is, ask for help to make nursing comfortable.

DAYS 4-7

My breasts feel full and tender. What should I do?

Your breasts will become fuller and firmer as your milk changes from colostrum to mature milk. This should happen between the 3rd to 5th day. Your baby may have a hard time latching on. Apply a warm compress to your breasts and then hand express a little milk to soften them. Latch the baby on after you relieve the fullness.

What should the milk look like?

Your mature milk will not look like formula or colostrum. It is more watery. This is normal.

How often should I nurse the baby?

Keep nursing 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. He may feed every 1½ to 3 hours around the clock, or more often during the day with a longer stretch at night. Wake your baby to feed if he waits more than 3 hours during the day or more than 5 hours at night to feed. Watch for the early hunger cues.

How can I tell if the baby is getting enough to eat?

Continue keeping track of the dirty diapers. Yellow poops = enough milk.

How can I get some rest?

Ask for help! Caring for the baby is what you should be doing. Let others take care of the house and other children. Sleep with the baby's crib right next to you. While nursing or cuddling in bed, you may fall asleep whether you intend to or not. Here are some safety guidelines when feeding or holding babies in bed. These guidelines should be taken with *all* babies whether mom is nursing or using formula.

- ♥ Make sure you have a firm mattress, not a soft mattress or water bed.
- ♥ Avoid placing your baby on a comforter or pillow. (Babies should not be fed on any soft surface, such as a couch or fluffy chair if there is a chance of falling asleep together.)
- ♥ Make sure the bedding is tight fitting.
- ♥ Remove any soft objects like loose pillows, blankets or comforters near the baby's face.
- ♥ There should not be any space between the bed and wall where the baby could become trapped.
- ♥ Never wear clothes with drawstrings or ribbons that could become tangled around the baby.
- ♥ Place the baby on his/her back, not his stomach.
- ♥ Avoid over bundling the baby. The baby should not feel hot to the touch.
- ♥ Avoid nursing or cuddling in bed while smoking or taking any medications that make you drowsy.
- ♥ Do not place the baby in bed with other children.

DAYS 7-10

My breasts feel less full than before? Am I losing my milk?

It is normal for your breasts to feel less full and firm. They become softer because the swelling, not the milk, goes away. You still have plenty of milk. Remember, yellow poops = enough milk. Another good sign is weight gain. If baby is gaining weight, he is getting milk.

What if my baby gets fussy and wants to eat even more than before?

Babies go through growth spurts at about 10 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks and 3 months. During this time, your baby may become more fussy and want to nurse more often. This is normal. Growth spurts usually last 1 or 2 days.

What can I do to get some more rest?

Keep asking for help! You need help now more than ever. Rest when the baby is resting or sleeping.

