



# 10

## VALUABLE TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding is a skill that mother and baby learn together. These 10 tips can help you reach your breastfeeding goals.



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## 01

## HOLD YOUR BABY SKIN-TO-SKIN

**Cuddle your baby on your chest for a gentle welcome to the world.** Holding your baby skin-to-skin will help your body to start making milk and will wake up your baby's feeding reflexes. This means that your baby will start looking for your breast sooner and your body will make more milk.

Babies are often more awake and interested in feeding in the first hour after birth. Stay skin-to-skin with your baby until after the first feeding.

Hold your baby skin-to-skin as much as you can for the first days and weeks after birth.

Skin-to-skin contact helps:

- breastfeeding
- keep your baby warm
- reduce your baby's crying and stress
- regulate your baby's blood sugar
- promote bonding
- your baby recover from birth



Your partner can hold your baby skin-to-skin too!

## HOW TO FEED YOUR BABY

### Look for your baby's early signs of wanting to feed:

- rooting reflex—you will see your baby turn their head and open their mouth in search of food when you touch their mouth or cheek
- licking of lips
- putting their hands to their mouth—babies that have their hands free can show you easily that they are hungry

*Crying is a late hunger cue. A crying baby will need to be calmed before feeding.*

- **Sit or lie down comfortably.** You might want to use pillows for support. There are many breastfeeding positions, so find one that works for you. If you had a C-section, you may need help to get into a comfortable position.
- **Relax** your shoulders and bring your baby to your breast, rather than your breast to the baby.
- **Hold your baby close**, tummy to tummy, nose to nipple, chin to breast and bottom tucked in close to your body. Support your baby's neck and shoulders firmly without pushing the back of your baby's head—this can make your baby push away from the breast.

- **Learn how to express your milk by hand.** A few drops of milk on your nipple will help to get your baby's attention to start feeding.
- For the first few weeks, you may need to **support your breast with your hand** when breastfeeding. Make sure your fingers are away from the areola (dark area).
- **Rest your baby's chin on your breast**, nose to nipple until your baby's mouth opens as big as a yawn and your baby moves their head back to take a big mouthful of your breast. You can also gently touch your baby's lips with your nipple until their mouth opens very wide.
- **When your baby feeds, both lips should be rolled outwards.** You will feel your baby suckling gently at first, and then stronger with a rhythm of one or two sucks per swallow, and little pauses to rest.
- **When your baby stops suckling or comes off your breast**, burp the baby and offer your other breast.
- **If you need to take your baby off your breast**, gently place a finger in the corner of the mouth until you break the suction.

- **A newborn's stomach is very small and cannot hold a large amount of milk.** That is why the first milk your breasts make (colostrum) is very concentrated. It is also why babies want to feed often in the beginning.

These images show the average size of a newborn's stomach and how much milk it can hold.



1-2  
DAYS



3-4  
DAYS



5-6  
DAYS



7  
DAYS



## WATCH THE BABY NOT THE CLOCK

**Instead of timing feeds by the clock, look for your baby's early signs of wanting to feed:**

- rooting
- licking lips
- putting hands to mouth

Babies need to eat often in the first few weeks: at least 8 or more times in 24 hours. This will help you to make more milk and will help your baby to gain back any weight they lose in their first few days.

Night feeds are important! They help to get breastfeeding started and help your body to keep making milk.

Some babies prefer many short feeds while others like fewer, longer feeds. Do not rush your baby—take your time.

The first 4 to 6 weeks are a learning period while your body builds its milk supply and you learn your baby's cues. Time, patience and humour can all help!

## LOOK FOR SIGNS THAT YOUR BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH BREAST MILK

**A sign your baby is feeding well is that by day 6, they are having 6 or more wet diapers in 24 hours and are pooping often.**

Another sign is weight gain. Many babies lose a bit of weight in their first few days then gain it back by the time they are about two weeks old.

When your baby is breastfeeding well and often, there is no need to give any other food or liquids —not even water.



## MILK PRODUCTION

**The more your baby breastfeeds in the first few weeks, the more milk you will make.**

Your baby will grow quickly in their first months. During these growth spurts, there will be days when your baby will be very hungry and will need to feed more often. During these times, your breast milk will change and increase to meet your baby's need.

**Research shows that breast milk is the only food or drink babies need for the first 6 months of life.** As your baby grows, your milk will change too. It will continue to have just the right amount of nutrients for your baby.\* Breast milk also has immune factors that help protect your baby from infection and disease.

At 6 months old, babies need to start eating iron-rich, healthy foods in addition to breast milk. Breast milk still provides important nutrition and protection, so continue breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby want to. Many families breastfeed until their babies are two years or older.

\* Babies need vitamin D for healthy bones. Sunlight is our main source of vitamin D, but because of our cold climate and because we need to protect baby's delicate skin from the sun, a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 ug (400 IU) is recommended for breastfed babies in Canada, starting from birth. Talk to your baby's health care provider for more information.

## LOOKING AFTER MOM

**In the early days, try to rest when your baby sleeps.** Accept or ask for help with housework and meals from your partner, family and friends.

Have visitors over only when you feel ready.

**Eat healthy foods and drink when you feel thirsty.** You may be extra thirsty, so try to have a glass of water every time your baby breastfeeds. See Canada's Food Guide for information on healthy eating.

**Do something fun every day.** Relax in the bath, take a walk with your baby, keep in touch with family and friends.

**If your nipples hurt,** make sure your baby has a good latch on your breast when feeding (see tip #2). If you need help, ask a:

- doctor
- nurse
- midwife
- lactation consultant
- another breastfeeding mom

Express a few drops of breast milk and let it dry on your nipple after each feeding. It has natural skin softeners and antibodies to fight infection. You don't need special creams, unless recommended by your doctor, nurse or midwife.

**If your breasts are swollen and painful**

(engorged), apply warm compresses and gently massage your breast before breastfeeding to help the milk flow better. Expressing some milk before feeding and breastfeeding more often will help your breasts feel more comfortable. Between feedings, apply cold compresses on your breast to decrease swelling.

**Discuss birth control with your doctor, nurse or midwife.** Exclusive breastfeeding (feeding your baby only your breast milk) for the first 6 months may delay the return of your period. But it is important to know that you can still get pregnant even if your period has not started.



## SMOKING, DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND BREASTFEEDING

**Nicotine, cannabis, alcohol, medication and other drugs pass into your breast milk**, so the safest choice is to not use them if you breastfeed.

There are also things you can do to decrease the risk to your baby.

### NICOTINE

Even if you smoke or use e-cigarettes (vape nicotine), it is still very important to breastfeed, so look for ways to decrease your baby's exposure to harmful chemicals by:

- only smoking/vaping outside your home or car
- washing your hands, brushing your teeth and changing your outer layer of clothing after you smoke/vape
- using e-cigarettes or vaping products purchased through legal and regulated sources
- talking with your doctor, nurse or midwife for information about ways to cut back or quit smoking/vaping

## ALCOHOL

It is safest to not drink alcohol if you are breastfeeding, especially when your baby is very young. An occasional drink can be okay, as long as you plan for it. Breastfeed (or express your milk) before you have a drink, then wait at least two hours per drink before breastfeeding again.

## CANNABIS

All forms of cannabis pass into breast milk. Until we know more, the safest choice is to not use cannabis (edibles, smoking or vaping) if you are breastfeeding. If you are not able to stop using cannabis completely try using less, and less often. Only use cannabis vaping products purchased through legal and regulated sources.

## MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS

Check with your doctor, nurse, midwife, pharmacist or lactation consultant if in doubt about any medications or substances you are using that might affect your breast milk.

## TALK TO OTHERS

**Talk to others if you have questions or worries about breastfeeding.**

Many people can give support and/or encouragement, including:

- family and friends who have breastfed
- other mothers who are breastfeeding
- support groups such as La Leche League
- local family resource centres
- your health care provider (doctor, nurse or midwife)
- lactation consultants



## WORKING AND BREASTFEEDING

**Your baby can have all the benefits of your milk even if you plan to go back to work or school.**

When breastfeeding is well-established, you can express milk and leave it with your baby's caregiver for feedings.

Breast milk can be stored in the fridge or freezer. Use clean bottles or bags and date them.

If not frozen, you can warm the milk by placing the bottle or bag in hot tap water for a few minutes before using it.

Thaw frozen breast milk by leaving it in the fridge for a few hours or place the frozen bottle/bag under cool running water. Once it begins to thaw, run warm water to finish thawing.

Do not microwave breast milk or heat it on the stove as it destroys the Vitamin C and some of the other immunity benefits. It can also cause hot spots that can burn your baby's mouth.

Ask your employer for flexibility so you can breastfeed or pump at work. Ask if you can use a fridge to store your breast milk. If you have childcare at work, school, or nearby, you may be able to breastfeed during breaks.

## ENJOY YOUR BABY

**All of your baby's senses are stimulated when you hold them.** A baby who is smiled at, talked to and cuddled will feel safe and secure. Breastfeeding is more than just giving your baby nutrients and calories for their body to grow. It strengthens the bond between you and your baby, and is one of many things you can do to build a secure and loving relationship.

As your baby gets older, they will breastfeed less often and the feeds will take less time. This makes it easier to keep breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby want to.

**You and your baby have the right to breastfeed anywhere, anytime.**

No one should stop you from breastfeeding in public or ask you to move or cover up.

For more information on infant feeding and nutrition, please visit [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca)