

Brooklyn Birthing Center Department of Lactation Services

Breastfeeding: What to do and what to expect

- 1) **Allow unrestricted access to the breast:** Keeping your infant skin to skin as much as possible will comfort and stabilize the baby and allow him to latch on as soon as he feels hungry. Early breastmilk, called **Colostrum**, is ingested in small amounts by the infant and is then digested very quickly. That is why most infants will seem to want to eat constantly, and that is very normal and healthy. It does not mean that there isn't enough milk; it means that the baby is simply taking in a little at a time and then getting hungry again quickly. This feeding pattern is very healthy and contributes to long term positive eating habits.
- 2) **Feed on demand:** Your baby will let you know when he is hungry; it is important that you follow your baby's cues and offer the breast whenever he is interested.
 - a. **Early signs of hunger** include any alertness, movement of the hands, movement of the lips or tongue, or sucking motions. Feeding your baby when he shows early signs will make it easier for him to latch on to breast properly and prevent stress for mother and baby.
 - b. **Late signs of hunger** include fussiness and crying. Try to avoid waiting until the baby is crying: it is much more difficult for him to achieve a successful latch when he is already frantic.
- 3) **Ensure adequate supply:** Feeding habits during the first few days can have a significant effect on milk supply long term. Skin to skin contact, feeding frequently, avoiding long stretches between feedings, and staying close to your baby are all important to help you establish an abundant milk supply.
- 4) **Allow your baby to use you as a "pacifier":** When babies are close to their mothers and allowed to suck at the breast, they are comforted and their heart rate, temperature, etc. are more stable. When your baby sucks at the breast, he is not only doing so for nutritional reasons, he is also satisfying a natural need to suck and be close to his mother. This is key to his mental and emotional development, which is as important as his physical growth.
- 5) **Make sure that your baby is latching properly:** When your baby is latched well he will receive adequate nutrition without causing you pain. On the other hand, if he is not latched properly, he will usually cause nipple pain and will not be able to remove milk from the breast effectively, even if you have plenty of milk.

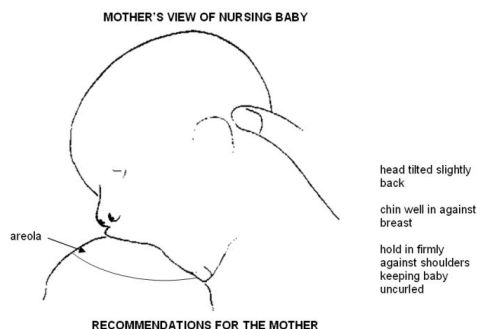
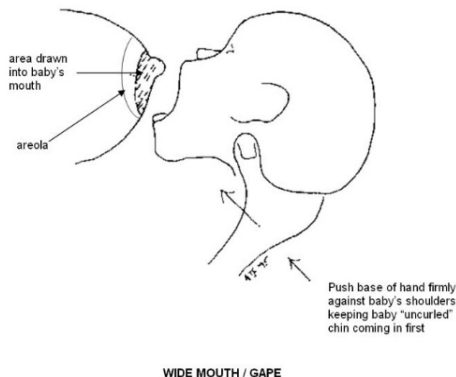
How do I get my baby to latch properly? (see images on following page)

- a. Allow your baby to lead- don't try to push him onto the breast or force your nipple into his mouth. Breastfeeding should be a relaxed, positive experience.
 - b. Position your baby in a way that allows him to extend his neck, with your nipple at the level of his nose. Your baby's chin should never be tucked down into his chest. This allows for an asymmetrical latch, leaves space for his nose to be away from the breast, and makes it easier for him to swallow and breathe.
 - c. Make sure your baby's mouth is open wide, and aim your nipple at the roof of his mouth. Only allow your baby to latch when his mouth is way open, and once he latches keep him very close to your body.
 - d. A good latch does not hurt you. If the latch is painful, use your finger to break the baby's seal on your breast and remove him from your nipple. Then try again, keeping the nipple up by the baby's nose and only allowing him to latch when his mouth is open wide.
- 6) **What does a good latch look like?** When your baby is latched well, his mouth will be open very wide, with the lips turned outward (flanged). The baby's cheeks will stay round as he sucks, and there will be no

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noises such as smacking or clicking from his mouth. Your baby may suck in bursts and then rest, or may suck slowly and continuously.

- 7) **Encourage your baby to stay “active” at the breast:** It is normal for your baby to rest during a feeding, and you should allow him to take small breaks. If you notice that your baby is falling asleep at the breast for long periods when he has not finished eating, encourage him to stay active by stroking your baby’s cheek or tickling his toes. You can also compress or massage your breast while your baby is latched on; this will start a flow into your baby’s mouth and encourage him to continue suckling.
- 8) **Finish the first breast first:** allow your baby to continue suckling on the first breast until he detaches on his own. Then offer the second breast, but it’s ok if your baby doesn’t want it. Most babies take one breast at some feeds and both breasts at others.
- 9) **Ignore the numbers! It’s about quality, not quantity:** Amount of time spent at the breast or number of feedings are much less relevant than the success that your baby is having getting milk from the breast. As long as your baby is latching well and you are ensuring an adequate milk supply, try to ignore the clock and let your baby do his own thing.
- 10) **Monitor your babies’ output:** The best way to know that your baby is getting enough milk is to monitor his output: if it’s coming out, it’s got to be getting in. The chart on the next page should help you to monitor how many times during 24 hours your baby passes urine and stool. The expected output for each day of life is listed there, and as long as the output is adequate you should assume that your baby is getting enough milk.
- 11) **If something feels wrong, ask:** Call if you are having breast or nipple pain, or if your baby is not having enough wet or dirty diapers, is not growing well, or does not seem to be developing normally. If you are experiencing any of those things or just feel like something is not right, call your midwife or lactation consultant right away. They can usually help figure out what is wrong and make recommendations of how to fix it, or make referrals as needed.
- 12) **Remember, you were made to breastfeed:** Your body was made to nourish your baby both physically and emotionally, and your baby is made to suckle at your breast. Allow your baby and your body to do what they were made to do and you may be surprised at how wonderful it is!



Photos courtesy of Jack Newman MD www.ncbi.ca