



Breastfeeding



Plan ahead to ask the right questions and manage your health

Breastfeeding is best for your baby. Breastfed babies are sick less often, and they are less likely to develop health problems like asthma, diabetes, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and some types of cancer. It is also good for mothers. Moms who nurse their babies are less likely to go on to get breast cancer, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and ovarian cancer. Babies should be breastfed for at least 12 months, and should not have any other kind of food or drink for the first six months.¹

Tips for success

With the right support, most women are able to breastfeed. To get ready, read about breastfeeding and take a class while you're pregnant. Talk to friends and family who have breastfed. Let your doctor know you plan to nurse your baby, and that you would like to breastfeed as soon as you are able – within an hour of birth, the baby's sucking instinct is strongest.² You may feel that this does not come naturally to you or to your baby, but with patience most mother-and-baby pairs catch on quickly. Your doctor, nurse and the hospital's lactation consultant are all there to help.

Get off to a good start

During your hospital stay:³

- Keep your baby in the room with you.
- Don't give your baby pacifiers or formula.
- Put your baby to your breast when he or she cries. Don't worry about feeding your baby too much or spoiling him or her.
- Ask to talk to the hospital's lactation consultant, if you have questions.

Help for nursing moms

To learn more about breastfeeding, or how to get through some of the common challenges, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' site on women's health, at womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding. You can also find support and information on topics like getting ready to go back to work at La Leche League International's website, lalli.org.



Sources

- 1 American Academy of Pediatrics website, Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk (accessed February 2017): www.aappolicy.aappublications.org.
- 2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health website, Your Guide to Breastfeeding (accessed February 2017): www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/breastfeeding-guide/Your-Guide-to-Breastfeeding-508_final.pdf.
- 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, The CDC Guide to Strategies to Support Breastfeeding Mothers and Babies (accessed February 2017): www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/BF-Guide-508.PDF.
- 4 National Business Group on Health website, Investing in Workplace Breastfeeding Programs and Policies (accessed February 2017): www.businessgrouphealth.org.
- 5 United States Breastfeeding Committee website, Federal Workplace Law (accessed February 2017): www.usbreastfeeding.org.

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To help your body make enough milk:³

- Nurse your baby at least every two to three hours. Nurse more often if your baby wants.
- Let your baby nurse as long as he or she wants to.
- Until breastfeeding is going well, try not to give your baby a pacifier.
- Try not to give your baby formula. The more your baby nurses from you, the more milk your body will make. Do not give your baby any water, juice, milk or food until he or she is six months old, unless the baby's doctor tells you to.²

Working moms and breastfeeding⁴

You may have concerns about nursing and going back to work. Most employers are happy to give you the support you need. Meeting your breastfeeding needs helps them as well.

- Employees who breastfeed are less likely to miss work to take care of a sick baby, because the baby doesn't get sick as often.
- Health care costs are lower since both mother and baby are healthier.
- Employees who get support for breastfeeding are happier and do better work.

Your rights in the workplace⁵

Federal law protects your right to pump milk for your baby during the workday. Employers with more than 50 employees have to give unpaid break time to pump as needed, for the first year after birth. Also, they must give you a place to pump, other than a bathroom. To learn more, go to the United States Breastfeeding Committee website at usbreastfeeding.org/workplace-law.

This information is meant to be educational. It should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please talk to your doctor about changes that may affect your health.

