Breastfeeding: Making It Work

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A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

Interested in breastfeeding? Wonderful!

Like many parents or caregivers, you probably have questions about breastfeeding. This booklet will cover many breastfeeding topics, including

- Breastfeeding as your baby grows
- Expressing and feeding your milk
- Choosing child care
- Returning to work and talking to your employer

Breastfeeding:
The Gold Standard

Babies do best on their own mothers' milk.

Formula provides food for the baby. Breastfeeding gives babies and mothers so much more. For example:

- Breastfed babies have fewer sick days and are less likely to get cancer or diabetes.
- Breastfed babies are less likely to die of SIDS.
- Breastfeeding moms are less likely to get diabetes or breast cancer, or to have a heart attack later in life.
- Breastfed babies and their moms are less likely to become overweight.
- Parents of breastfed babies miss less work due to a sick child.

Myths and Facts About Infant Feeding

MYTH: All babies need to get milk in bottles.
FACT: If a breastfeeding mother does not need to be away from her baby for more than a few hours, she may prefer never to use bottles.

MYTH: In hot weather, a baby needs water in a bottle.
FACT: Formula or mother's milk provides all the liquid a baby needs.

MYTH: Cereal in a bottle will help my baby sleep longer.
FACT: Cereal in a bottle will not help your baby sleep, and it may upset his tummy. Do not feed your baby cereal until he can eat it from a spoon.

MYTH: If a mother's diet is poor, she should not breastfeed.
FACT: You do not need a special diet to breastfeed. Even if a mother eats less than a good diet, her milk still is perfect for her baby.

MYTH: If I'm too busy to feed my baby, I should just prop his bottle.
FACT: Propping a bottle is not safe. A baby can choke. Take a break from what you are doing and enjoy this special time with your baby.

Exclusive Breastfeeding:
Best for Baby, Best for Mom

What is exclusive breastfeeding?

- Exclusive breastfeeding means feeding your baby only your milk. This is the healthiest choice for your baby until he is six months old.

Why is exclusive breastfeeding best?

- Babies are healthier.
- Babies grow better.
- It is easier for mom to make enough milk for her baby.
- It helps prevent another pregnancy while your baby is still small.

Doesn't my baby need water in hot weather?

- No. All the liquid your baby needs is in your milk.

Won't solid foods help my baby grow?

- For babies under six months, solid food replaces your milk. This means your baby gets fewer calories, not more.

Won't solid foods help my baby sleep longer?

- No. Solid foods will not help your baby sleep longer.
- Cereal in a bottle will not help your baby sleep, is bad for her teeth, and may upset her tummy.

Should I stop breastfeeding when my baby is six months old?

- Six months is a good age to start feeding solids, but a baby's main source of food should still be your milk.
- It is best to breastfeed until your baby is at least one year old. Continue for as long as you and your baby wish.

Should I Schedule My Baby's Feedings?

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It is best to feed your baby when he is hungry. It may feel tempting to put your baby on a strict feeding schedule, so you will always know when he wants to eat. But do you always eat at exactly the same time every day?

It is best to feed your baby in response to her changing appetite. Your baby may be more or less hungry at different times or on different days—just like you! It is best to be responsive to her changing appetite.

Doctors recommend that all babies be fed in response to their hunger cues, not on a strict schedule.

Advantages of cue-feeding include:

- Babies tend to gain weight better, especially after 3-4 months of age.
- Babies are calm for feedings, so they feed better.
- Breastfeeding moms have an easier time making enough milk for their babies.
- Babies learn to eat when they are hungry, which may help to prevent later obesity.

But How Do I Know When My Baby Wants To Eat?

Your baby may not be able to speak, but he still is able to tell you what he needs. Crying is just one of many ways your baby "talks" with you.

- **When a baby is hungry,** she will open her mouth, stick out her tongue, and move her head from side-to-side. While sleeping, she may start to wriggle. If her hand is near her mouth, she may try to suck on it.

- **When a baby is full,** he will move away from the food. Never prop a bottle, because it forces a baby to eat more than he wants. It makes him overeat and can increase vomiting. Just like adults, babies know when they have had enough.

- **When a baby wants to have some quiet time,** she often will look away. She may have changes in her skin, her movements, or her breathing.

- **When a baby wants to cuddle,** he will look at you. As he gets older, he will smile.

- **When a baby is unhappy,** she will fuss and sometimes cry. All babies do this from time to time. You can never "spoil" your baby by comforting her. Responding to her cries will help her feel more secure and cry less often.

Photo of Baby Quinn courtesy of Ana June Creative
www.anajunecreative.com

When you try to understand what your baby is "saying," both of you will be happier and more confident!

Feeding Babies As They Grow

When babies are small, all they need is mother's milk. But as they get bigger, it can be confusing to figure out what to feed them and when to start.

Here are some general guidelines to follow:

- **If you can, breastfeed exclusively for the first six months.** This means feeding your baby only mother's milk—no formula, no solid food. Babies are healthier and grow best on mother's milk, and it is easier for mom to make enough milk for her baby.

- **Don't rush to start solid foods.** Babies do not need solid food before they are six months old. Their bodies are not ready to digest it. You may have heard that cereal in a bottle will help babies sleep better. Actually, it is bad for their teeth, upsets their tummies, and does not help them sleep.

Photo courtesy of Wake AHEC

- **Continue breastfeeding through your baby's 1st birthday.** Your baby will be exploring the new tastes and textures of solid food, but most of his calories still will come from mother's milk.

- **Breastfeed as long as you and your baby wish.** Many mothers continue breastfeeding when their babies are toddlers. It is good for both mother and baby.

Keep Up The Good Work!

Photo courtesy of Chapel Hill, NC La Leche League

Sometimes, it may feel hard to continue breast-feeding. Did you know that doctors recommend that you nurse your baby for at least a year?

Here are some tips to make it easier to continue to breastfeed:

1. **Breastfeed your baby often.** The best way to continue making enough milk for your baby is to breastfeed your baby whenever she is hungry. If you think that you are not making enough milk, nurse your baby more frequently.

2. **Avoid feeding formula.** The healthiest food for your baby is your milk. Human milk is the only food he needs for the first six months of life. Feed ing your baby formula may make it harder to make enough milk for your baby.

3. **Plan for separations from your baby.** If you need to return to work or school, make a plan to feed your baby your milk while you are apart. This extra effort will make sure that your baby gets the best food possible— your milk. It also helps maintain your milk supply.

4. **Consider sleeping near your baby.** The safest place for a baby to sleep is in a room with his parents. It is normal for babies to nurse at night, and sleeping nearby makes it easier. Nursing at night also helps keep up your milk supply.

5. **Eat as well as you can,** and drink when you are thirsty. You do not need a special diet to breastfeed. Try to eat well for your own health, but even if your diet is poor, your milk still is perfect for your baby.

6. **Get help if you need it.** Find a friend who is breastfeeding her baby, or join a local support group. For bigger problems, contact a board-certified lactation consultant, WIC peer couselor, or a La Leche League Leader. The list on the next page is a good place to start.

Finding Breastfeeding Help

There are many types of breastfeeding help available. The next two pages list a few sources that provide accurate and reliable breastfeeding information and support.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC):
WIC is a federally funded nutrition program. Many WIC offices have breastfeeding peer counselors on staff who can offer breastfeeding help. To find the nearest WIC office, call your state's toll free number listed at *http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/tollfreenumbers.htm*

Local Hospital Lactation Support:
Many hospitals have lactation consultants on staff who offer support over the phone or in person. Services and fees will vary, but most hospitals offer some free services after delivery. Call your local hospital to find out what kind of support is available.

La Leche League:
La Leche League offers women free breastfeeding support and information. Their website offers information about breastfeeding and about finding a local support group. Visit their website at *http://www.llli.org or call 1-877-4-LALECHE (1-877-452-5324).*

Resources Continued ...

Zip Milk:
Zip Milk is a website that provides a list of local breastfeeding resources based on zip code. Zip Milk currently provides information for Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and New Jersey. *http://zipmilk.org*.

KellyMom:
KellyMom offers evidence-based information about breastfeeding and other parenting topics. The website also hosts numerous online forums where parents can exchange information directly. *http://www.kellymom.com*

LactMed:
LactMed provides a free online guide to drugs and breastfeeding. It can be searched at *http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?LACT*. Always consult a health care professional before starting or stopping a medication.

Infant Risk Center:
The Infant Risk Center provides information about how various medical conditions and medications affect breastfeeding.
Visit *http://www.infantrisk.com/category/breastfeeding/*

Other Helpful Websites:

- Government websites such as *http://www.womenshealth.gov/breast feeding and http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/*
- Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute (CGBI). CGBI is located at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Our website includes information on current research and breastfeeding education and advocacy. *http://cgbi.sph.unc.edu/*
- Best for Babes, offering breastfeeding education and advocacy: *http://www.bestforbabes.org*
- Dr. Jennifer Thomas' resource page on breastfeeding: *http://www.drjen4kids.com*

Can I Breastfeed If I Need To Be Away From My Baby?

YES, absolutely.

The following pages include information on continuing to breastfeed even when you and your baby need to be apart.

Photo courtesy of Leslie Koehn Photographic
www.lesliekoehn.com

Be Prepared!

It takes a little extra effort to continue to breastfeed when you are going to be away from your baby, but many mothers find that the effort is well worth it.

The next few pages can help answer your questions and help you to be more prepared.

- Expressing and Storing Your Milk
- Bottles for the Breastfed Baby
- Choosing Child Care that Supports Breastfeeding
- Talking to Your Employer

Expressing Your Milk

If you are going to be away from your baby for more than a couple of hours, you are probably going to want to express your milk.

- **Do I have to use a pump?** No. Some women prefer to express their milk by hand. Hand expression can be even more efficient than pumping, and the milk is of better quality. Talk to an experienced breastfeeding mother, a La Leche League Leader, or a lactation consultant to get tips on hand expression.

- **What kind of pump should I use?** It depends on how you will be using it. For occasional expressing of your milk, a single manual or electric pump can be a good choice. For regular expressing, a double electric pump is best. Talk to a lactation consultant, La Leche League leader, or WIC staff member about what to use and where to get a pump.

- **How often and how long should I express my milk?** It is best to express your milk at the same times you would normally nurse your baby. When separated from their babies, most women express their milk every 3-4 hours for 15-20 minutes. Regular expressing helps you to have milk to feed your baby when you are apart, and helps to maintain your milk supply.

Photo courtesy of Wake AHEC

Storing Human Milk

Follow these simple rules for storing human milk:

Location	Storage Time	Comments
Table / Room temperature	Up to 4 hours	Cover container and keep milk as cool as possible
Insulated cooler bag	Up to 24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers
Refrigerator	Up to 4 days	Store milk in the back of the refrigerator
Freezer	Up to 12 months ≤6 months is best	Store milk toward the back where the temperature is the most constant

Reference: Centers for Disease Control. 2019. Proper Storage and Preparation of Breast Milk. <<*https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm*>>
From: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. (2017) Clinical Protocol Number #8: Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use for Full Term Infants..

Important Reminders:

- Wash your hands before expressing your milk.
- Use clean containers, such as screw cap bottles or cups with tight caps. If using plastic bags, use only heavy-duty bags designed for human milk storage.
- Label your milk with the date expressed, and use your oldest milk first.
- If bringing milk to a child care center, follow their labeling guidelines.
- Thaw frozen milk in the refrigerator or by swirling in a bowl of warm water. NEVER use a microwave to thaw or warm human milk.
- Do not re-freeze your milk once it has been thawed.
- Your child care center may have to follow different rules for milk handling and storage, but follow these rules at home.

Bottles for the Breastfed Baby

Do all breastfeeding babies need bottles?

- **No.** Breastfeeding babies often receive their mothers' milk from bottles because mother and baby need to be separated. If you do not need to be away from your baby, you may not need to use bottles at all.
- A baby also can be fed his or her mother's milk from a cup.

If needed, when should I try to introduce a bottle?

- Try to wait until you and your baby are comfortable with breastfeeding, usually 2-4 weeks.

What kind of bottle should I use?

- Use a bottle with a slow-flow nipple.

What if my baby does not feed easily from a bottle?

- Babies often prefer breastfeeding and do not like taking bottles from their mothers.
- Have other caregivers try bottle-feeding when mom is not nearby.
- Experiment with different types of slow-flow nipples.

Once I start bottles, can I still breastfeed my baby when we are together?

- **YES!**
- One of the best ways to keep making enough milk is to nurse your baby often when you are together.

What if I have more questions?

- Help is available! Contact a Lactation Consultant, La Leche League, or WIC.
- For more details, consult the earlier section of this booklet, "Finding Breastfeeding Help."

Tips for Choosing Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care

Many mothers have to be away from their babies because of work or school. This can make it harder to continue breastfeeding. Choosing a child care provider who is supportive of breastfeeding is an important part of making it easier to be away from your baby.

Take this checklist when you visit a child care center and ask:

- Do they support your desire to continue feeding your baby your milk?
- Is there a place where you can comfortably sit and nurse your baby?
- Does the staff feed babies when they are hungry, rather than on a strict schedule?
- Are they willing to hold off feeding right before you pick up your baby?
- Does the center have a refrigerator for storing milk?
- Are you welcome to visit and breastfeed your baby at any time?

There are so many good reasons to continue to breastfeed your baby.

Take the time to find a child care provider who will help and support you.

You will be glad you did!

Talking to Your Employer

When should I talk to my employer?

- The sooner, the better. If you can, talk to your employer while you are pregnant, or a few weeks before going back to work.
- Remember, though—it is never too late!

What should I ask?

- Where can I express my milk? You need a clean and private place—not a restroom. Ideally, there will be an electric outlet for the pump, a sink for washing the parts, a comfortable chair, and a table.
- When can I express my milk at work? Usually, expressing milk can be done during work and break times. Most women express their milk every 3-4 hours, for 15-20 minutes.
- Where can I store my milk? If a refrigerator is not available, bring a cooler with ice packs.

Why should my employer help me with this?

- Supporting breastfeeding saves companies money. Breastfeeding employees use less sick time and have lower health care costs, because their babies are sick less often.
- Ask this child care center for the one-page resource entitled "Supporting Breastfeeding Employees." It was written for you to share with your employer.

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In Collaboration With:

NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center
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