



# Breast Feeding Guidelines

## Before and After Your Milk Comes In

It is important to understand that each baby-mom pair is unique, so their feeding patterns are also unique. This handout will help guide you in figuring out how frequently and for how long YOUR baby needs to nurse. It is also important to understand that feeding patterns change after your milk comes in. The guidelines thus change also and will be described separately.

### BEFORE MILK COMES IN

**First breast feeding:** *If possible, put your baby to breast within the first hour after birth.*

#### How often should I nurse?

- Put your baby to breast at least every 3 hours, or sooner with feeding cues. If your baby doesn't latch within the first 12-24 hours, start pumping every 3 hours and feed your baby the colostrum with a syringe.
- Continue latching attempts every 3 hours.
- Cluster feedings may occur as your milk comes in.

These frequent (sometimes hourly) feedings are very exhausting, but will hopefully prevent engorgement as your milk comes in.

(See "Engorgement, Plugged Ducts and Mastitis" handouts)

Milk production works by supply and demand. Milk must be removed 8 times in 24 hours in order to produce more milk. If the baby can't empty the breasts, then a pump must do it. (See "Pumping and Storing Breast Milk" handout)

#### For how long should I nurse?

- Nurse as long as your baby desires. If your nipples start getting sore, limit the sessions to 10 minutes per breast. If nipple pain or trauma worsens, the latch is incorrect, so be quick to ask for help. (See "Latching" and "Sore Nipples" handouts)
- As your baby nurses, listen for swallowing sounds, ie "clicking" or "sighs" with each swallow.

**Expect your baby to lose weight for 3-4 days after birth.** Babies are born with extra fluid in their bodies to maintain them until your milk comes in. There is very little colostrum available, but it is very important for your baby's health and immune system. If your baby loses more than 7-10% of his birth weight while waiting for your milk to come in, you will likely need to give supplemental feedings of formula or pumped colostrum/breast milk until your milk is in and/or until your baby can nurse adequately. If you SUPPLEMENT, you must PUMP also. Once your milk is in, your baby should gain  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 ounce per day and be back to birth weight by 14 days of age.

### MILK IS IN: BREAST FEEDING GUIDELINES

#### How often should I nurse? How do I get my baby to sleep longer at night?

- Allow ONE 5 hour stretch of sleep at night during the first couple weeks, while baby is still under birth weight.
- Otherwise, be sure your baby nurses at least every 3 hours during the day. If she wants to eat sooner than that, feed on demand both day and night.
- During a 24 hour time period, your baby should nurse 8-12 times.
- Once your baby is back to birth weight, allow her to sleep longer stretches at night.
- Always nurse on demand, but encourage more feedings during the daytime, so your baby will eventually demand fewer feedings at night.
- During a long stretch of sleep at night, your baby will skip a couple of feedings, so she'll nurse a couple extra times during the day to make up for it.
- If your baby sleeps for long stretches on a regular basis, consider pumping half way through that time frame, for comfort and to keep your milk supply up.

#### How many minutes do I nurse? Do I nurse from one breast or both at each feeding?

- There is no set number of minutes to nurse your baby, as each baby is unique. Some are efficient and others are slow. Some need to empty both breasts and others get full after emptying one breast. This is because some Mom's can store lots of milk and others can store only small volumes.
- By following the guidelines below, you will learn how long it usually takes *your* baby to nurse, and whether or not you need to nurse from one side or both.

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# MILK IS IN: BREAST FEEDING GUIDELINES

*Your baby must completely empty the first breast before switching to the second breast, so that she gets the high fat, high calorie milk that is deepest in the breast.*

## There are 3 types of milk in your breasts: SKIM, WHOLE, and CREAM

1. Skim / foremilk comes out in the first couple minutes while you baby is suckling quickly to entice the let down.
2. Whole milk comes out for the next 5-10 minutes during the initial let down. Your baby will suck slowly and deeply and you must listen for swallowing sounds (clicks or sighs).
3. Towards the end of the whole milk phase and the start of the cream, your baby will get sleepy and start pausing longer between swallows. But the cream is most important, so your baby must wake up and keep swallowing it, in order to empty the breast.

## How do I know when the breast is empty? How do I keep my baby awake to empty it?

When your baby no longer makes swallowing sounds (disregard mouth or throat movement), wake your baby up by using **breast compressions** to squeeze the hind milk out of the breast and into baby's throat. Do this like you would squeeze a tube of tooth paste. When the milk hits the back of your baby's throat, she will have no choice but to wake up and swallow. Repeat the compressions every couple of minutes as long as your baby will start back up again. Eventually, your baby will no longer respond to breast compressions, likely because there is nothing left to squeeze out, and thus, the breast is empty! At this point, see if your baby will take the other breast.

## How long does a feeding usually take?

Using the above guidelines, you will figure out over time how long it takes YOUR baby to nurse. The *average* baby will take 15-20 minutes to empty the first breast and will take the second breast for 5-10 minutes. However, some babies will empty the first breast in 5 minutes, and others might take 30-40 minutes.

## Do I nurse from one breast or both at each feeding?

Again, you will figure out over time what works best for your baby. The average baby will nurse 1 ½ breasts, but many babies get all they need from one breast each feeding, and others need to empty both breasts every time. If your baby takes both breasts, always start the next feeding with the one you ended with the last time.

## Do I need to pump or supplement with pumped breast milk or formula?

Ideally you will just breast feed for the first 3-4 weeks, and supply and demand will naturally work itself out. Pumping and supplementing won't be necessary if you have enough milk and your baby is capable of removing enough of it to maintain your supply and for your baby to gain 1 ounce per day. However, if your baby loses too much weight or fails to gain adequate weight, pumping and supplementing may be necessary, usually temporarily. (See "Triple Feeding" and "Low Milk Supply" handouts) An important rule to follow is to always pump if your baby is supplemented. This will help keep the supply and demand concept in check. It is also important to introduce a bottle by 3-4 weeks of age if you want your baby to take a bottle in the future. This is also a good time to start pumping once per day to get milk to put in the bottle and to start stocking milk in the freezer if possible. Be sure to use a slow flow nipple with a standard base and insert it far into your baby's mouth to keep the jaw open, similar to how the mouth should look while nursing. (See handouts "Bottle Feeding" and "Return to Work")

## How much can I expect to go in and to come out?

**Milk in:** By day 5 or so through the first 2-3 weeks, an average 7 pound baby needs about 18 ounces per day in order to gain the expected 1 ounce per day. This comes to about 2 - 2 ½ ounces every 3 hours. This gradually increases over the next week or two to about 24-32+ ounces per day.

**Stool out:** Sticky black meconium → brown → green → yellow mustard seedy.

When milk is in, expect 3-4 large stools per day plus a squirt of stool with each diaper change.

**Wets:** When milk is in, expect at least 6 wets per day.

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