

Latching Well

A baby who does not latch well can cause nipple pain and trauma for Mom, and often has difficulty transferring milk and gaining weight. This information will describe the Cross Cradle Position with great precision, which is sometimes necessary early on in order to achieve a proper latch. It is usually a good idea to start with this position, because you will have better control over your breast and baby, and you will be able to see your baby's lips well. Also, with time and practice, both you and your baby will be able to relax a bit more during feedings. Soon, it will be helpful to learn other positions so that the pressure points on your nipples are varied.

Step by Step Latch for the Cross Cradle Position

Correct



1. **Position your baby** at the level of your breasts, using pillows if needed. Her face will look straight ahead at your breast, and should not be turned to the side. Her body will hug yours, "tummy to tummy." Support baby's neck and shoulders with one hand, and support your breast with the same side hand.

2. **Support your breast** by grasping it with the same side hand. Grasp the breast **from underneath**, with your hand shaped like a **U** under your breast, ie fingers and thumb pointed towards the ceiling. Your **elbow should be down**, touching your side. Compress your breast between your thumb and fingers, like you are holding a sandwich which you will present to your baby's mouth. Keep your hand far back from your nipple so that it doesn't touch your baby's face during the latch.

Incorrect



because Mom's left elbow is UP and her left hand is in a C position!

3. **Squeeze some milk** onto your nipple to get baby interested. Sometimes dribbling sugar water on the nipple will entice baby to latch.

4. **Press your thumb** gently into the breast tissue and gently pull the skin, which will tip the nipple **AWAY** from the lower lip and also aims the nipple towards the roof of baby's mouth.

5. **Baby's nose** should be in line with your nipple, as she approaches the nipple from the side. Tilt her head back slightly so her mouth can open wide and her bottom lip will jut out. Tickling her upper lip with your nipple will entice her to open. Wait for an open mouth!

Mom's view from above



Left thumb Left breast

6. **Plant baby's lower lip** on the breast tissue, far away from the nipple. It helps if your skin is not slippery with milk. The space between your nipple and your baby's lower lip is where the tongue will stroke to strip milk out of the ducts. **Do not lay your nipple ON the lower lip!** If you do, the tongue will stroke the nipple, which hurts! Once the lower lip is planted, guide the upper lip just over the top of the nipple. In other words, lay the breast tissue on the rolled out lower lip and slip the nipple in just under the top lip. Move baby onto the breast quickly, when the mouth is wide open. Squeeze your breast to squirt milk into baby's mouth to keep her interested. Double check to make sure the lips are curled out.

As baby suckles, the tongue curls around the breast tissue and covers her lower gum. If the tongue rubs on the nipple instead of the breast tissue, it will appear pinched and you will see a **white crease across the top of the nipple**. This must be corrected to prevent further trauma to your nipple.

Other Latching Pointers:

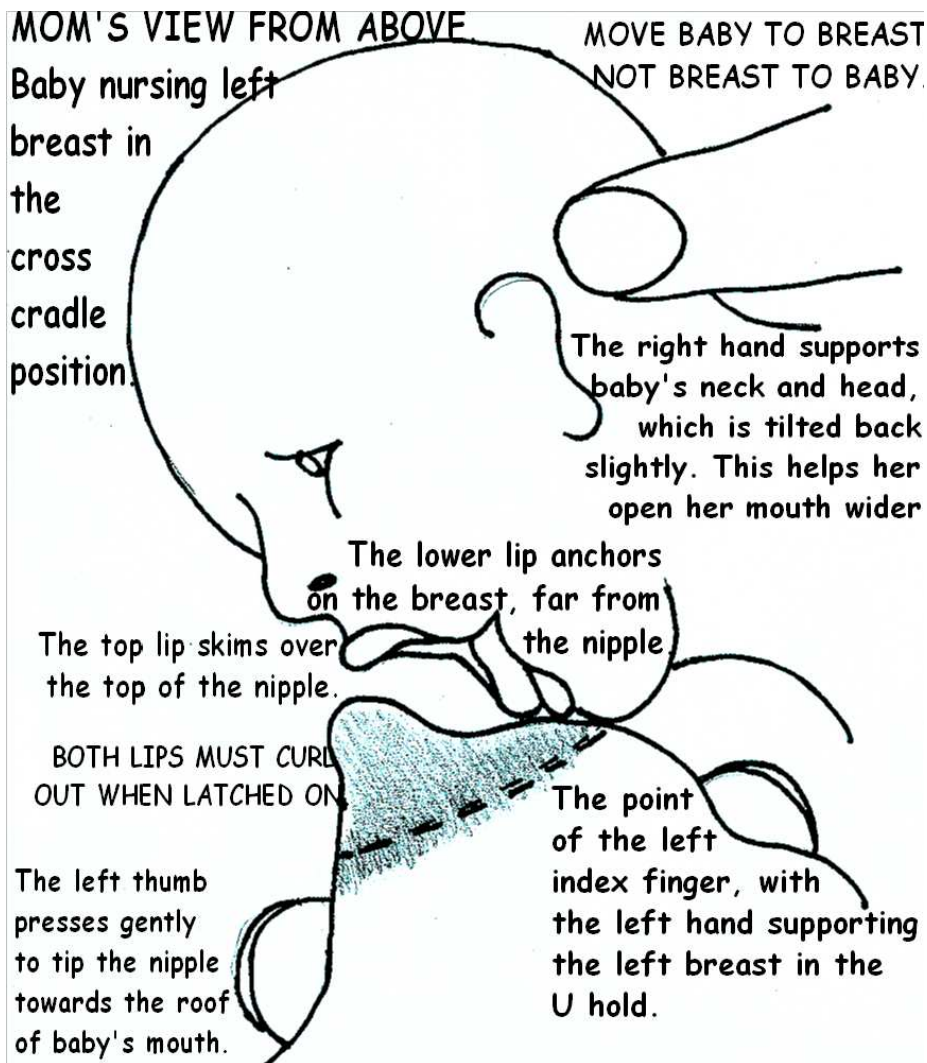
Tolerate no pain! If your baby's latch feels pinched or sharp after several seconds, you need to break the latch and start over. Suckling may feel like a tugging or pulling, but a correct latch does not hurt. It is less frustrating to spend 10 tries to get a good latch than it is to nurse when a latch is poor and the nipples are sore.

Tolerate no noise! A good latch is not noisy. Clicking, smacking, and dimpling of the cheeks are signs that the latch is not right. Start over!

Binky??? Avoid pacifiers or other nipples if possible until your baby latches on easily and correctly with all feedings. Also wait until you can trust your baby to let you know that she is hungry and not be "pacified" to sleep with the binky instead of asking to be fed. Use a pacifier with a large base so that baby's mouth is open wide while sucking on it. **Parent's Choice Soothie** pacifier is the best I've found so far.

Don't knock yourself out!! Limit both Mom and baby's frustration levels. If a latch does not occur after numerous tries, feed baby pumped milk and then put baby back to breast after she has quieted down. If baby still does not latch, finish the feeding of expressed breast milk and start anew the next time. If you end up supplementing that feeding, you will likely need to pump also.

Key Points for Latching Well



Other Nursing Positions



Football Hold

Place 2 pillows behind your back to support your body forward so your left elbow and your baby's legs have space to extend behind you.



Side lying



Cradle Hold