



Breastfeeding Tips for New Mothers

I am a strong proponent of breast feeding. It is the best thing for the baby and for you. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breast feeding for at least 1 year and longer if mutually desired by both the mother and child¹. The truth is – any amount of breast feeding will be beneficial for you and your baby: 2 days, 2 months or 2 years. Stick with it as long as you can and know that you are doing the best thing for you and your baby. Breast feeding mothers loose weight quicker², get protection against certain cancers³⁻⁹ and have a host of other medical benefits¹⁰. Breast fed babies are healthier and studies have shown that there are increases in their IQ scores as well¹¹.

Breast feeding is also easy – no need to think about packing bottles and no worries about staying out longer than planned – your food supply is always with you. It is especially easy for feedings during the middle of the night – you hardly even have to wake up to feed the baby! Breastfeeding isn't always easy to learn how to do, especially in the beginning. And if your baby has complications such as delivery via c-section or suctioning at birth, it can be even more difficult. Stick with it, it will work and you will enjoy it. It is an incredible bonding experience for both mother and baby.



My tips for breastfeeding success are:

- Try to feed your baby as soon after birth as possible. Most babies are awake and alert for the first 1-2 hours after birth. After that they may be groggy for a few days (they went through a pretty traumatic ordeal coming into this world!!). The best time to start breastfeeding is during that alert time right after they are born. This will teach them how to suck and latch on properly. They may not do it again for a day or two – but getting them started right away is the best way for successful breast feeding. If you have a c-section this may be difficult because you will be groggy. Don't worry if you can't feed the baby right away, you will still be successful at breastfeeding.
- Take advice from as many different people as possible. Every baby is different and every person you talk with has different experience and different advice. Don't be disappointed if you have difficulties at first. Something that someone tells you is bound to work.
- It takes about 2 SOLID weeks to become good at breastfeeding. Stick with it – it'll work.
- Ask to talk to a lactation consultant while you are still in the hospital. Depending on where you deliver, they typically only come to visit you on the day you are leaving, so tell them if you are having difficulties getting the baby to latch on and they will come sooner. Ask to talk to them several times if you need to.
- Talk to every nurse you get. They each have different advice. It is difficult to breastfeed at first, so get as much help as possible.
- Ask for a nipple shield if you are having trouble getting your baby to latch on. It saved us and most of the nurses won't recommend trying it. However, keep in mind that you should only use the nipple shield as a last resort because it is difficult to get the baby off of it once you start using it – but if needed – it can be a life saver.
- Use lanolin cream after each feeding. This will help your nipples to remain supple and will reduce soreness and dryness. Keep a tube of lanolin in multiple locations for convenience: near your rocking chair, downstairs, in your diaper bag, in your purse, by your bedside, etc. Many of the tubes that you can buy are big and you will never use everything in them. What you really need are lots of little tubes – so that you can have one everywhere you might need it. Keep the tubes around even after you have stopped using it on a regular basis. You may need it again when the baby starts to teethe.
- Drink a LOT of water. Breastfeeding can be extremely dehydrating and you will need to make sure you have a lot to drink so that you don't get weak and so that your milk comes in strong. Keep a full glass of water by you at all times. Put water in the nursery so that when you feed the baby during the middle of the night you can drink then too.
- Get a bra or nursing tank that you can sleep in. You will need one because your breasts will get very heavy when your milk comes in – and they may leak! Whatever you end up getting, you don't want to use an underwire bra for sleeping.
- Buy some nursing clothing. There are a variety of manufacturers out there. It is the easiest way to breastfeed in public without having to “bare it all.” Many mothers wear the nursing clothing when pumping at work because it keeps them from getting cold and feeling “exposed.”
- During the first 2 weeks or so at home, it is important to make sure your baby is getting enough to eat. Many new babies are sleepy during their first week or two of life and may sleep when they should be eating. Your baby shouldn't sleep longer than 2-3 hours without eating. If they are sleeping, you need to wake them up to feed them. Feeding them this often will insure that they are getting enough and it will also help your milk to come in stronger. Also, make sure your baby is having at least 5-6 wet diapers per day. Babies can get dehydrated very easily. If they are not having 5-6 wet diapers, feed the baby more often. If they still aren't wetting frequently, call your pediatrician. Your baby may be dehydrated, in which case you might have to use supplemental feeding systems or wake the baby more often to feed until your milk comes in better. Bring a wet diaper with you to the pediatrician's office and they can test to see if the baby is dehydrated. This is important: A dehydrated baby will sleep, act content and will NOT cry. They seem happy – so you don't think anything is wrong – but they are losing weight and it can get serious if they don't get enough to eat. **THEY DON'T TELL YOU THIS STRONGLY ENOUGH** at the hospital and in the new baby classes. Don't assume that if your baby is content, he must be alright. Make sure he is urinating!!
- It is often difficult to tell if your baby has urinated during the first few weeks of life. They don't urinate a large volume and diapers now-a-days are so super absorbent, it may be difficult to tell if it is wet or not. I highly recommend putting a piece of toilet paper over your baby's genitals so that you can tell if he/she has gone. This will give you the security of knowing exactly how many wet diapers the baby has – as you can definitely tell when the toilet paper gets wet.
- For the first 2-3 weeks – you might find it useful to keep a feeding record. That way it will be easier to keep track of feedings and excretions. It is also helpful to bring it with you to the pediatrician's office so they can see how the baby is doing.
- If you end up needing to supplement with formula and you want to breastfeed – try to do it without giving the baby a bottle. They have supplemental feeding systems that allow you to give the formula (or breast milk if you have some that you have pumped) through a small tube that hooks up to your nipple. This way you won't give your baby nipple confusion and it will be easier for him to nurse. A nipple shield makes using this supplemental feeding system easier as it protects the baby's mouth from being injured by the supplemental feeding tube.
- After your initial visit to the pediatrician, they may tell you that you don't have to come back until the baby is 2 months old. I highly recommend another visit to the pediatrician after 2 weeks. All babies loose weight, but they should have gained back their birth weight by 2 weeks. This is a good check to reassure you that you are being successful



in breastfeeding. All pediatricians will weigh your baby whenever you ask – don't be afraid to ask – you aren't being a pest and they are used to these types of concerns/questions.

- When feeding your baby during the middle of the night – don't talk to him or play with him. Make your feedings as “business-like” as possible and do it in the dark with just a night-light. I even recommend that you change the baby's diaper with the lights off. You want your baby to learn right away that he should sleep at night and that he shouldn't be waking up to play during the middle of the night. Feel free to play with him and talk to him during daytime feedings so that he quickly learns the difference.
- If you are planning to go back to work, you will need to build up a supply of breast milk for your baby to have after you are at work. It may seem impossible that you will ever be able to pump because you spend so much time breastfeeding. Here are some suggestions:
 - o Get a good pump – there are several brands that have good pumps – but you definitely want an electric pump. A manual pump will be too cumbersome and take too long if you are going to be pumping on a regular basis. You can purchase an electric breast pump, or you can rent one.
 - o Be patient – you won't get much milk at first from pumping, but as you gradually build up a supply and as your milk comes in more, you will get more and more by pumping.
 - o Choose one feeding in the AM and only feed your baby on one breast. Pump the other breast (you can actually pump both – the extra stimulation helps you develop a stronger milk supply!).
 - o After a “shorter” feeding, pump both breasts to get whatever remaining milk is left (there won't be much, but that is how you slowly start to build up a supply).
 - o Do an extra feeding. If your baby normally eats at 10 am and naps until noon – do another feeding at 11 AM while the baby is napping.
 - o If your baby sleeps for a long stretch at night, pump about an hour after you put him down. That will give you a good supply and will make you less “engorged” when you feed him during the middle of the night.
 - o Be consistent. If you add an extra “feeding” by pumping (either in the AM or PM), do it at the same time everyday. That way your body will learn that it needs to supply extra milk at that time everyday.
 - o When you give your baby a bottle for the first time, he should be at least 6-8 weeks old. You don't want to introduce it too soon or the baby may not want to go back on the breast. Drinking from a bottle uses different mouth motions and is easier because the milk comes all at once and the baby doesn't have to wait for your let-down. But you also don't want to wait too long or the baby may never take the bottle. Have someone other than you give him a bottle once per week starting at least two weeks to a month before you plan on returning to work.
 - o It is difficult to pump both breasts simultaneously – I recommend getting a hands-free pumping kit. There are kits that go into your current bra as well as ones that you can buy that go around you just for pumping. The hands free kit makes all the difference in the world!
- o Massage your breasts while pumping starting at the outer edges and working your way in – this will help to empty the milk ducts.
- o Make sure your nipple isn't hitting the edge of the pump shield to avoid irritation. Many people who buy breast pumps end up having to get a larger or smaller breast shield for pumping. The size of the breast shield that you need is dependent on the size of your nipples, not on the size of your breasts – so don't think that you don't need one because you have small breasts.
- Have everything you need within arms reach while breastfeeding – phone, TV remote, computer, books you want to read, cell phone, water, pacifier for the baby, burp cloth, nursing pillow, something to put your feet up on, etc. That way you don't have to disturb the baby to get up and get something.
- Drink LOTS of water. Your body needs it and you will find you are parched from breastfeeding. Always keep a glass or bottle of water by you and drink often. Keep one where you nurse during the night as well as by your bedside.
- I recommend pumping as soon as possible. It will help your milk supply come in better and it will help you to build up your frozen supply for when you go back to work. It will also give you enough so that when you give the baby his first bottle, he doesn't have to wait for you to pump first. You can be pumping and your spouse or loved one can give the bottle to the baby in the other room.
- Even if you don't go back to work after having a baby, you will probably want a breast pump. Depending on how often you use it, you can get a manual one or an electric one. This will come in handy for a variety of different reasons including:
 - o You want to go out for an evening or afternoon and leave the baby with a care giver.
 - o The baby takes a long nap and you want to relieve your engorged breasts.
 - o You want to help increase your milk supply by adding in extra pumpings.
- You will definitely want to freeze some of your milk away for future use. Always freeze in bags (you can buy them wherever you bought your pump), not bottles. If you freeze in a bottle there is a much higher likelihood that the milk will get freezer burned. Milk frozen in bags can be stored for 6-12 months in a good freezer.
- You can store fresh milk for 5 hours at room temperature OR 5 days in the refrigerator OR 6 months in the freezer (12 months if you have a deep-freeze).



- Don't bother buying bottles for your baby ahead of time. You probably aren't going to need them for the first 1.5 – 2 months anyway and you never can tell what type of bottle your baby will want.
- Believe it or not, babies can be very fussy about what type of bottle they will drink from. Rather than buying lots of one kind, I suggest purchasing several different types of bottles and trying them out to see which one your baby likes best. Then once you are sure which one they like, stock up on that one.
- You want to buy slow flow nipples for the bottles. Especially in the beginning – but even later. You want the bottle's flow to be similar or slower than the flow your breast. Breast milk comes out slow, then fast, then slow, then not at all, then slow, then fast. etc. If your bottle is always fast, then your baby may gag or may end up preferring the bottle because he gets fed quicker.
- Don't bother with a bottle sterilizer – they are a pain in the neck to use – we just boil all of the bottles once a week for 5 minutes and wash them in between. It is easier and more cost effective!

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Written by:

Judy P. Masucci, Ph.D.

A Mother's Boutique, LLC

P.O. Box 219

Wexford, PA 15090

Telephone: 724-934-8795

<http://www.mothersboutique.com>