Breastfeeding tips for new mothers.
I am a strong proponent of breastfeeding. It is the best thing for the baby and for you. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least 1 year and longer if mutually desired by both the mother and child. The truth is — any amount of breastfeeding 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. Breastfeeding mothers loose weight quicker, get protection against certain cancers and have a host of other medical benefits. Breastfed babies are healthier and studies have shown that there are increases in their IQ scores as well.

Breastfeeding 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!

Getting started with breastfeeding may not always be easy to learn how to do, especially in the beginning. Stick with it, it will work and you will enjoy it. It is an incredible bonding experience for both mother and baby.
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. Getting them started right away is the best way for successful breastfeeding. Does that mean if you can’t feed your baby right away that you won’t be able to breastfeed? Absolutely not! 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 experiences and different advice. Don’t be disappointed if you have difficulties at first. Something that someone tells you is bound to work. And if you have access to one – talk to a lactation consultant – they will have the ability to give you advice that is tailored to your situation.

Stick with it – it’ll work. It can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks and even up to a few months to become good at breastfeeding.

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 necessary.

Talk to every nurse you get. They each have different advice. It may be difficult to breastfeed at first, so get as much help as possible.

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.
Be sure to stay hydrated. Breastfeeding can be extremely dehydrating and you will need to make sure you are keeping up with your thirst 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 or daytime 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 nursing clothing when pumping at work because it keeps them from getting cold and feeling “exposed.”

During the first few 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
Be patient.
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. Newborn babies will also have several stools each 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.

- **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 are super absorbent, so 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 breastmilk 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. If you or your pediatrician feel that you need to supplement, please call a lactation consultant. Keep in mind that MOST pediatricians have very little training on breastfeeding and the best place to get advice on breastfeeding and/or supplementing is from a trained lactation consultant.

- **After your initial visit to the pediatrician, they may tell you that you don’t have to come back until the baby is one or two months old.** I highly recommend another visit to the pediatrician after two weeks. All babies loose weight, but they should have gained back their birth weight by two 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.
If you are planning to go back to work, you will need to build up a supply of breastmilk 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:

• 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.

• 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.

• 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).

• Do an extra feeding. If your baby normally eats at 10 am and naps until noon – pump at 11 AM while the baby is napping.

• 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.

• When you give your baby a bottle for the first time, he should be at least 4-6 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 different 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 then you give him a bottle once per week starting at least two weeks to a month before you plan on returning to work.

• It can be difficult to pump both breasts simultaneously because you don’t have any hands free to do anything else. But this is the best way to pump – as you will get more milk output by double pumping than by single pumping – I recommend getting a hands-free pumping kit. This will allow you to do other things (even something as simple as scratching your nose) while pumping. The hands free kit makes all the difference in the world!
• Massage your breasts while pumping starting at the outer edges and working your way in – this will help to empty the milk ducts.

• Make sure your nipple isn't hitting the edge of the pump shield to avoid irritation. Some women who buy breast pumps end up having to get a larger or smaller breast flange for pumping. The size of the flange 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, 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.

- **I recommend pumping once you have established a good breastfeeding routine with your baby.** 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 may 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:

- You want to go out for an evening or afternoon and leave the baby with a care giver.
- The baby takes a long nap and you want to relieve your engorged breasts.
- You want to help increase your milk supply by adding in extra pumpings.

If you are going back to work, you will definitely want to freeze some of your milk away for future use. Always freeze in bags or milk trays, 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 or milk trays can be stored for 6-12 months in a good freezer.

You can store freshly expressed milk for 4-5 hours at room temperature OR 4-5 days in the refrigerator OR up to 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 4-6 weeks 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 or nipple 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 also later. You want the bottle’s flow to be similar or slower than the flow of your breast. Your baby has more control over the flow of milk from the breast than from a bottle. 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 – boil all of the bottles once a week for 5 minutes and wash them in between. It is easier and more cost effective!
References


