

Nutrition Guide

Breastfeeding tips & techniques: the first days

Right after a baby is born is an exciting time, but also a tiring one. Knowing a few things about breastfeeding makes the first day a little easier.

After delivery

The best time to begin breastfeeding is almost right after your baby is born. Your baby is usually very alert right after birth, and when placed on your chest, the baby may move to your breast and begin sucking.

Do not worry if you cannot breastfeed your baby right after birth. Most babies have no difficulty latching on even if breastfeeding is delayed. Your healthcare professionals can help you build and maintain your milk supply until you have an opportunity for that first special feeding.

Skin-to-skin contact (kangaroo care)

Have your nurse place your baby directly on your chest with a blanket over the two of you. Snuggle the baby on your chest in the valley between your breasts. Ideally, leave the baby there for at least 30 minutes or until the baby breastfeeds.

Skin-to-skin contact after birth has the following benefits for baby:

- You and your baby can get to know each other
- The baby can feel your heart beat
- Being close to mum is the best place for your baby to adjust to their new surroundings
- More stable skin temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure
- The baby is less likely to cry



Colostrum

Once your baby is born, and for 3 to 4 days afterward, your breasts produce a form of milk called colostrum, which is thicker than regular breast milk. This yellowish or golden first milk contains all the nutrients your newborn needs for the first few days of life, in the perfect amount. It helps protect your baby from infection, which is why it is good to start breastfeeding as early as possible.

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Don't worry if it seems that your baby is only getting a small amount during these first feedings. Before your milk supply increases (usually by day 3 or 4), your baby only receives a small amount of colostrum from your breasts – only teaspoons to tablespoons each feeding. This small amount is enough to nourish your baby.

Frequent nursing

- Nurse frequently for the first few days, every 1-3 hours (beginning of session to the beginning of next session) to:
- Help build a good milk supply
- Provide your baby with nourishment, antibodies, and a variety of health benefits
- Help your baby clear the first stools (meconium)
- Help lessen the chance of engorged breasts when milk first comes in
- Practice with breastfeeding when professional support is usually available and before your breasts become full

Getting started

The key to successful breastfeeding is proper positioning of your breast and your baby's mouth. Good positioning allows your baby to fully latch on to your breast. Use a pillow to help support your baby's body. You will want to nurse frequently to maintain your supply.

It may take several tries to get a good latch. If your baby is not latched on properly, start over. And if the first feeding does not go perfectly, take a break! You and your baby are both new at this; so, patience is often needed. Just try again in 30 minutes or so. It's OK to ask for help. And remember to nap while the baby naps!

After a Caesarean birth

Breastfeeding early and often offers many benefits to both you and your baby after a Caesarean birth. Your baby's sucking stimulates the mother's uterus to contract more quickly and speeds your healing. Breastfeeding also brings you and your baby emotionally closer, which is especially important if you were separated following birth or if the birth was traumatic.

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