



Breastfeeding Basics

Breast-feeding is the most natural way to feed your baby, but that doesn't mean that the technique comes naturally to every mother-baby pair. In fact, it can take several weeks to get started, and a few months to feel completely skilled. Babies are born knowing how to find the nipple and suck; mothers, on the other hand, do not instinctively know how to breast-feed. They have to learn. Here are some tips from the experts—breast-feeding moms.

- **Engorgement.** When your milk first comes in your breasts will fill quickly and might become very hard. Expressing a small amount of milk makes it easier for the baby to latch on and also relieves the feeling of fullness in your breasts.
- **Latching on.** Express a little milk and put it on your nipple. This will help your baby to understand where the milk comes from and encourage him to suck. If your baby is frantic and crying inconsolably, try introducing a calming “white” noise by turning on the shower, an untuned radio, or a vacuum cleaner. Swaddling your baby also helps calm him down for breast-feeding.
- **Sleepy baby.** Many new babies fall asleep while feeding; others have a difficult time waking to feed. To wake your baby up for breast-feeding try:
 - Burping or diapering him between feeding on each side
 - Undressing him down to his diaper
 - Laying him flat on his back (most newborns don't like this unprotected position and will wake immediately)
 - Tickling him under the chin or cheeks while nursing to remind him to suck
 - Massaging his arms and legs while nursing (a great job for your partner)
- **Leaking milk.** Another common but annoying problem is the leaking of breast milk when you are not feeding the baby. This is very common during the first weeks of breast-feeding. Using a couple of nursing pads at a time and

changing them as soon as they are wet will make you more comfortable. Tops made with patterned fabric hide the leaks more easily. Leaking will lessen with time.

- **Pain.** During the first few days, breast-feeding will also stimulate your uterus to contract, causing cramps or afterpains. In the first few weeks nipples may get sore for a variety of reasons. The most common cause of sore nipples is improper positioning. Try different holds such as the football hold (the baby's head is at the breast and his feet are under your arm), the cross-cuddle hold (the baby's head is at the breast and his tummy is resting on your tummy), and the side-lying hold (both of you are lying down on your sides with his head at your breast).

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