

Breastfeeding: Overcoming the Challenges of Breastfeeding

Many new mothers begin breastfeeding and soon want to give up because they experience some of the challenges that can be part of breastfeeding a newborn. But with a little patience, you can overcome these challenges.

Some women experience nipple or breast discomfort during nursing. This is often caused by an incorrect latch or a poor sucking position.

“If you felt any pinching at any time or if you felt him slip down and come off the nipple, and suddenly in the middle of a feeding it was painful, then we’d want to stop, break his suction and reposition him.”

To help prevent sore nipples, spend as much time as necessary to make sure you both are positioned properly, with a large area of breast, including the areola, in your baby’s mouth. If your baby’s latch is poor, detach your baby from your breast and try again.

If you have sore or cracked nipples, contact your healthcare provider or a lactation consultant. She can help you with any latch problems you may be having, or she may recommend a pure lanolin nipple cream that is safe to use while nursing.

Sometimes your breasts may feel too full of milk or engorged. When your breasts are engorged, your milk ducts press against your nipples. The areola gets too hard or too flat for the baby to get a deep latch. In this case, you can relieve the engorgement by stimulating your milk flow. Take a warm shower or hold warm compresses on your breasts. Or, manually express enough milk to soften your breasts. Call your consultant or healthcare provider right away if you experience extremely sore breasts, hot spots or red streaks on your breasts, itchiness or develop a fever. These symptoms may signal an infection.

During the first few weeks, your breasts may ‘let down’ at times when they are not feeding. Although inconvenient, this wetness is normal. One trick to managing this unwanted milk flow is to gently press on your nipple. Placing absorbent breast pads inside your bra can help protect your clothing. Reusable and disposable pads are available in most pharmacies or stores that sell baby supplies. Use whichever kind feels good to you. Just be sure to change them whenever they get wet. This leakage will stop when your milk supply becomes established.

Around the second week of life, your baby’s appetite may increase significantly. Because of this he may want to nurse more frequently, often between 8 and 12 times a day. This is called a growth spurt and will happen several times within the first six months of life. During a growth spurt, your baby will wake up to feed more often during the night, sometimes as much as every hour. Your body will respond to this increase in demand by producing more milk.

Growth spurts usually average three to five days. To keep up with this increased demand it’s very important for you to rest, eat well, and drink lots of water. If you have any questions about how often your child is eating, talk to your baby’s doctor.

If you feel stressed by nursing, or tempted to quit, talk to your partner or a friend who is supportive of your breastfeeding. Call your healthcare provider or lactation consultant for advice. If you need help finding a lactation consultant in your area, ask your pediatrician, your obstetrician or your hospital for a referral.

Remember, you don’t have to do it all alone. Dad can participate in feedings, too, by bringing the baby to you when it’s time to nurse by bringing you a glass of water and burping and changing the baby.

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Whatever challenges you face during breastfeeding, remember, the health and emotional benefits of a comfortable breastfeeding relationship will be rewarding to both you and your baby.