

Breastfeeding Your Newborn

Every baby is different. And every mom and baby may approach breastfeeding a little differently. But here is a general approach to a breastfeeding session that you may want to try, until you get more comfortable and figure out what works best for both you and your baby.

Most breastfed newborns eat every 1.5 to three hours because their stomachs are so small. Encourage your baby to feed often. A typical baby will eat 8-12 times a day.

After the first week or so, most babies will let you know when they are hungry by bringing their hands to their mouths, making rooting or sucking motions, or becoming very active. Get to know your baby's feeding cues and answer them. This is called Demand Feeding.

When your baby signals, she is ready to eat, sit in a comfortable position using a pillow to support your baby and have your baby facing the breast you are going to start with. Each time you nurse your baby, switch the breast you begin feeding with. Most newborns usually don't empty the second breast as well as the first and this will help make sure that both breasts are equally stimulated.

Make sure your baby's ears, shoulders and hips are in good alignment. Help your baby to latch-on properly. Hold his head with one hand and guide your nursing breast to his mouth, aiming your nipple at his nose.

"Now bring him up, and we'll just kinda tickle a little bit. Nice...."

"When he does open his mouth wide, pull him on to you."

"There we go."

Make sure you keep most of your areola, the dark part around your nipple, in his mouth. His nose and cheeks should be touching your breast and his chin should make a slight indent into your breast. Keep your baby close to your body during feeding. There's no need to make an airway. Your baby can breathe fine.

If your baby does not latch-on properly, or if you feel any pain, take your baby off your breast by sweeping your finger in her mouth to break the suction and try again. When your baby does latch on and begin to suck, you may feel a tingling or pulling sensation.

"You'll feel a gentle tugging sensation, but it should not be painful. We're seeing some nice big drawing sucks, some nice deep sucks and even hearing an occasional swallow. What we're listening for is a little 'k' sound."

You can tell your baby is actively feeding when his jaws are moving, and you can hear his rhythmic swallowing.

"He's going to suck, suck, suck, swallow, breath and then maybe forget for a minute what he was doing, then wake back up and nurse again. That's normal and expected for very new babies."

Nurse with the first breast for as long as your baby wishes; your breast should soften as you feed.

If your child falls asleep after getting just a little milk, you may need to encourage your baby to continue the feeding. The best way to wake up your sleepy baby during breastfeeding is skin to skin contact.

After finishing with the first breast, burp your baby before offering him the second. To burp your baby, place your child across your lap, or on your shoulder, and pat the baby's back. You can also burp your newborn by

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sitting her sideways in your lap and patting her back while you hold her chin steady with your thumb and forefinger. Then begin feeding with the second breast.

Newborns will usually tell you when they are finished nursing by falling asleep or turning away. After a feeding, your baby should look relaxed and content.

With time, you and your baby will begin to get into a comfortable breastfeeding routine. Enjoy this time of calm, bonding with your baby and allow yourself to feel content and relaxed as a mom.