



Freyja Medical Clinic

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Breastfeeding Your Baby

One of the most special times in a mother's life is when she is breastfeeding her baby. Experts agree that breastfeeding is best.

Benefits Breast milk is nature's perfect baby food. Your milk has just the right nutrients, in just the right amounts, to nourish your baby fully.

Baby

There are many reasons why breastfeeding is best for your baby:

- The colostrums — a yellow, watery pre-milk — that your breasts make for the first few days after birth helps your newborn's digestive system grow and function.
- Breast milk has antibodies that help your baby's immune system fight off sickness.
- The protein and fat in breast milk are better used by the baby's body than the protein and fat in formula.
- Babies who are breastfed have less gas, fewer feeding problems, and often less constipation than those given formulas.
- Breastfed babies are at lower risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Mothers

Breastfeeding isn't just good for babies. It's good for mothers, too.

Breastfeeding:

- Is convenient.
- Releases the hormone oxytocin. This makes the uterus contract and helps it return to its normal size more quickly.
- May lower your risk of osteoporosis and some forms of cancer.
- Burns calories.
- Is cheaper than bottle feeding.
- Creates a special bond between you and your baby.

Facts About Breastfeeding

During pregnancy, your nipples may start to drip a little colostrum. After you give birth, your body sends a signal to your breasts to start making milk. Within a few days, colostrum is replaced by milk.

Once feeding is established, the first milk that flows out of your breasts is watery and sweet. This quenches the baby's thirst and provides sugar, proteins, minerals and fluid. As the feeding goes on, the milk becomes thick and creamy. This milk will give your baby the nutrients he or she needs to grow.

Getting Started

Although breastfeeding is a natural process, it may take some practice and patience to master. Mothers and babies have to learn together.

To help give you a good start, during pregnancy tell your doctor that you plan to breastfeed.



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During labor, remind the doctor and nurses that you plan to breastfeed. They can help you get started right after delivery.

How to Breastfeed

Babies are born with the instincts they need to nurse, such as the rooting reflex.

Cup your breast in your hand and stroke your baby's lower lip with your nipple. The baby will open his or her mouth wide (like a yawn). Quickly center your nipple in the baby's mouth, making sure the tongue is down, and pull the baby close to you. Bring your baby to your breast — not your breast to your baby.

Let your baby set his or her own nursing pattern. Many newborns nurse for 10 to 15 minutes on each breast.

Nurse on demand. When babies are hungry, they will nuzzle against your breast, make sucking motions, or put their hands to their mouth. Crying is a late sign of hunger.

When your baby empties one breast, offer the other. Don't worry if your baby doesn't continue to nurse, though.

Diet

When you are pregnant, your body stores extra nutrients and fat to prepare you for breastfeeding. When you are nursing:

- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Make sure you get 1,000 mg of calcium a day.
- Avoid foods that bother the baby.
- Drink at least eight glasses of liquid a day.

Sex and Birth Control

When you are ready to resume having sex, think about birth control. Even though you may not have menstrual periods while you are breastfeeding, you can still get pregnant. Talk with your doctor about what form of birth control is right for you.

Barrier methods such as latex condoms or a copper intrauterine device (IUD) are good options because they do not affect your milk supply.

Work

Many mothers keep nursing their babies after they return to work. If you want to breastfeed when you go back to work, you may want to look into buying or renting a breast pump.

Any breast milk is better than no breast milk. Try to breastfeed without supplementation for at least the first 6 months of your baby's life if you can.

Breast Health

As they start to breastfeed, some women may have a few minor problems. Problems that may occur include:

- Engorgement
- Sore nipples



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- Blocked ducts
- Mastitis (an infection of the breast caused by bacteria in the milk ducts)

Most often problems are easy to treat. If you have any of these signs of a problem, contact your doctor:

- Fever
- Pain
- Bleeding
- Rash
- Lumps
- Redness

To keep your breasts healthy and to increase the chances of breastfeeding success, try these tips:

- Learn proper nursing technique.
- Use your finger to break the suction before you remove your breast from your baby's mouth.
- Gently pat your nipples dry with a clean cloth after feedings.
- Use only cotton bra pads.
- Apply 100 percent pure lanolin to your nipples after feeding.
- Don't wash your nipples with harsh soaps or use perfumed creams.
- If one nipple is tender, offer the other breast first.

Finally ...

Breastfeeding is a special gift of love and health only you can give your baby. Breastfeeding is natural, but it takes practice. You and your baby can learn together.

(Adapted from the American College of Pediatrics)