

# Connecticut Childbirth and Women's Center



## *Congratulations!*

*You have a beautiful new baby. This is a new, exciting, and potentially exhausting time in your life. Below are some guidelines for the early postpartum week. Please do not hesitate to call with any questions or just to give us an update! Your midwives are still on call 24/7*

## .....Postpartum Care of the Mother.....

### Vaginal bleeding after birth

In the days following your birth, vaginal bleeding should get lighter in color and amount each day. Over the next few weeks, this type of vaginal discharge (called **lochia**) will change color from bright red, to darker red, to a lighter red/pink, to a whitish/yellow color.

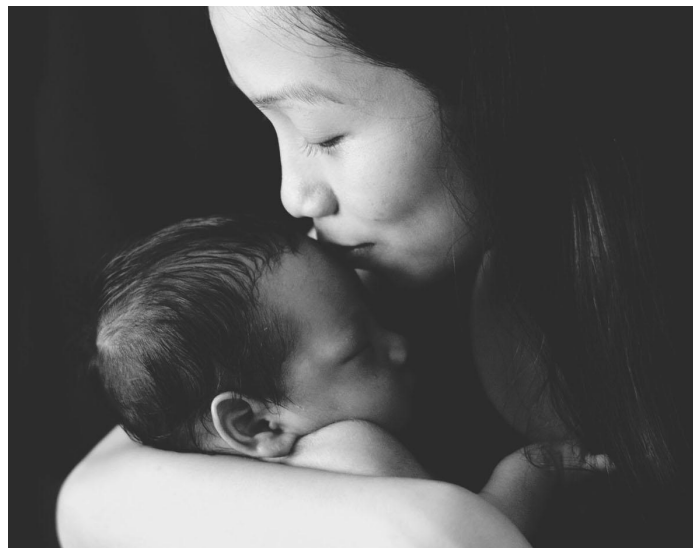
It is normal for this discharge to continue for as long as 4-8 weeks after you give birth.

Key changes in lochia:

- Day 1-3: right after the birth the discharge is red or brownish red
- Days 3-5: your discharge should begin to lighten in color and volume to a pinkish brown color
- By day 10 or so it is the discharge is often only a pale pink and requires only a "light day" pad.
- After 2 weeks: lochia becomes a whitish or yellow color.

Remember...

- Use sanitary pads, not tampons or menstrual cups. Do not put anything in your vagina until the discharge stops
- Vaginal bleeding may have an odor, but it should not be fishy or unpleasant
- It is not uncommon for nursing to cause your uterus to contract and for discharge to gush out. This is not anything to worry about.
- If bleeding turns back to bright red after day 3 it can be a sign that you are over doing it...slow down.
- If you pass any clots larger than a golf ball, go to the toilet and sit down. Look at your flow. If it is not more than normal replace your pad with a new one and monitor your bleeding. If you continue clotting, especially with heavy flow that saturates a maxi pad in less than an hour, call the midwives.



(Oleyography, 2012)

- If you notice a sudden increase in bleeding; urinate, lay down, firmly rub below your navel until you feel the firm "ball" of your uterus. Nurse your baby. If increased bleeding continues or is concerning call the midwives' office.
- If you have any concerns about bleeding or discharge call us.

## **Afterbirth pains**

Cramping after childbirth is normal. The cramping is caused by your uterus starting to contract and shrink back down to the size it was before pregnancy. Cramping can help prevent you from bleeding too much. Breastfeeding can help with this process, and many women feel more cramps during breastfeeding.

- You may experience more pain with cramping if it is not your first baby
- Painful cramping decreases 2-3 days after giving birth
- You can take Ibuprofen (Motrin) 600mg-800mg every 6 hours (take with food), and apply a heating pack to your back or stomach for pain relief
- You may add Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 650 mg every 6 hours if you need additional pain relief
- Keeping your bladder empty by urinating every 2-3 hours helps your uterus return to its non-pregnant size

## **Rest and activity**

- Get as much rest as you can during the next few weeks.
- Try to sleep when your baby sleeps
- Focus on yourself and the baby; don't worry too much about letting little things slide for the moment.
- Get/accept any help with cooking, cleaning, laundry and care of other children.
- Limit visitors and keep visits short (unless you desire the company).
- Remember that fatigue makes it more difficult with all the changes you are going through physically and emotionally right now. It also can have an effect on milk supply.

## **So, what can I do?**

- Limit strenuous activity and stair climbing during the first few weeks postpartum
- Resume your regular activities gradually over the next six weeks-rushing may only set you back.
- If you can, stay close to home for 2 weeks postpartum, limiting outings to only what is absolutely necessary.
- Snuggling with your new baby, taking naps when you can and focusing on feeding you and the baby are the best activities in the first few weeks after the birth

## **Caring for your sore bottom**

- If you had any stitches after your vaginal birth, they should gradually feel a little better each day. Most stitches dissolve on their own over time, so you do not need them have them removed. Listed below are some measures that help with the healing process:
- Cold compresses (for no more than 30 minutes) are helpful for pain and swelling in the first 1-2 days after birth. Tucks or witch hazel pads can also provide relief. You can make “pad-cicles” by pouring witch hazel onto a pad and then freezing it
- Sitz baths are helpful for healing sore bottoms and hemorrhoids
- Change your pad regularly and use warm water in a spray bottle each time you use the bathroom. Spraying the water before, during, and after urinating can help with discomfort. Pat dry, and for bowel movements, wipe front to back gently or use wet wipes
- Call if discomfort from the stitches get worse instead of better, or if you notice increased pain, swelling, or discharge from the area with stitches

## **Bath and showers**

- It is best to avoid a bath until 3 days postpartum, particularly if you have any stitches. Sitz baths, however, are encouraged
- Showers can be very relaxing and help to relieve the pain of engorgement. Take only warm, not hot, showers the first few days postpartum. Someone should sit in the bathroom while you shower during the first few days postpartum

## **Hemorrhoids**

Hemorrhoids are swollen tissue around the anal area which can develop or become worse after giving birth. Here are some suggestions to help improve them if they are bothersome to you:

- Sitz baths three times a day (as described above) can help with hemorrhoid pain
- Increase drinking water to 3 liters per day, eat fruits, vegetables, focusing on fiber rich foods, and avoid caffeine
- Use hypoallergenic baby wipes, or witch hazel pads such as Tucks brand, or make your own with disposable cotton makeup pads and a bottle of witch hazel.
- Topical numbing spray or anesthetic spray can be used externally for stitches or hemorrhoid pain
- Use over the counter stool softeners as needed



- If hemorrhoids are particularly bothersome you can use over the counter creams or call the midwives for a prescription.

## Bowel function

Many women are afraid to pass stool (poop) after giving birth. Unfortunately, avoiding bowel movements will only make it more uncomfortable when you do go. Do not be afraid, but try not to strain. Taking a stool softener daily (or even twice daily) will help with this especially in the first couple weeks. Stool softeners make it easier to have a bowel movement but do not *make* you go. If you were constipated during the pregnancy, it will usually start to get better after giving birth.

Bowel management tips:

- Drink plenty of water (8-10 glasses of water a day at least!)
- Move or walk often
- Eat high fiber foods such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables

## Postpartum sweating and increased urination

Many changes that happened in your body during pregnancy reverse after having your baby. Your body will get rid of any extra fluid over the first 1-2 weeks after birth. After labor and birth you may experience short term loss of bladder tone and leakage of urine- you can practice kegel exercises to help correct this problem if it continues. You may also notice that you will urinate more often and sweat more than normal during this time.

Sweat management tips:

- Bathe or shower often
- Wear cotton, breathable, or natural fabrics
- Dress in light layers

Make time to go to the bathroom:

- It is important to urinate frequently. An empty bladder helps your uterus contract and go back to its pre-pregnancy size



(Pixabay, 2016g)

Stay hydrated during this transition period:

- Keep a large water jug near you at all times and drink, drink, drink! Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water a day.

## Food and hydration

Remember to eat! You need food to survive just like your baby. Eat nutritious foods every day like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein (like lean meats and/or beans). These foods will provide your body with the nutrients and energy it needs to heal and take care of your new baby. Besides eating the foods list above, other dietary recommendations include:

- Continue to drink 8-10 glasses of water per day. Have water anywhere you will be nursing the baby as nursing can bring on dry mouth and a powerful thirst
- Eat nourishing foods like soups and stew as well as fruits and veggies. You will also want to be sure you are getting adequate protein.
- Continue to take your prenatal vitamins as long as you are breastfeeding
- You need approximately 500-600 extra calories a day to make milk for your baby, so keep this in mind
- Limit the amount of junk food you eat like chips, sweets, soda, and energy drinks. These foods contain a large amount of calories with very little nutritional content

## Newborn Care

- Hold, love, cuddle, carry, nurse and rest with your newborn.
- Cord care: Keep clean and dry. The clamp (if it is a plastic one) will be removed at the home visit.
- Your baby will have several meconium poops that are black and sticky. They will then transition to breast milk poops once your milk is in. This poop tends to be yellowish and seedy. Most babies poop anywhere from 2-10 times per day after. It is not abnormal for them to skip days too. As long as baby is nursing well and gaining weight, there is no cause for concern. Breastfed babies rarely become constipated.
- Baby should pee at least once in the first 24 hours, 2-3 times in the second and then start having 5-6 wet diapers per day after that.
- Don't hesitate to call your pediatrician if your baby seems disinterested in nursing, listless, whites of eyes appear yellow tinged, has a temperature over 100.1 or he/she is excessively irritable.

## Postpartum activity and exercises

For all moms, it is important to start slowly and increase activity over time until you reach your normal routine. Walking is a great exercise to start with and it is good for everyone...mother, baby, and family!

Listen to your body as you start to resume activity:

- Gauge your exercise by your vaginal bleeding. Heavy or bright red bleeding means you are doing too much
- Increased soreness and fatigue can also be a sign you are over-extending yourself

### Abdominal exercises:

- Muscles have been stretched during pregnancy and work will be needed for them to return to their pre pregnancy state
- Start slow.
- Kegels, kegels, kegels:
- Squeeze the muscles you would use to stop the flow of urine, hold for 10 seconds, and release
- Tightening of vaginal muscles
- May start shortly after birth
- Important for urinary continence throughout life
- If you continue to have urine leakage, don't suffer- call the midwives. We can help you get the resources for restoring these muscles, like pelvic floor physical therapy

### Warning signs:

- Stop exercising if you experience bright red vaginal bleeding, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, dizziness, or increased pain. Rest and seek help if symptoms do not improve.



(Pixabay, 2016f)

## Family adjustment during the postpartum period

Having a newborn isn't easy and it is a huge adjustment for the whole family. During this transition time it can be hard to find balance between the needs of the new baby and other responsibilities. Focusing on what is most important can help make this adjustment easier.

### Try to prioritize:

- Enjoy spending time sitting and holding your newborn
- Take time for self-care
- Care for your children and family
  - Everything else can wait
  - Try not to stress about the small stuff



(Granneman, 2008)

It's normal to feel like there is so much to do, but just not enough time in the day.

Here are some suggestions to help with time management:

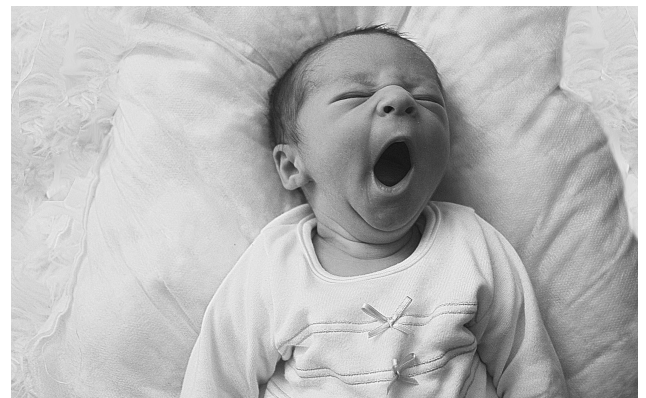
- Develop a daily/weekly routine
- Create and display a calendar of important dates and events
  - Allow the whole family to see and add to it
- Make a checklist of tasks to be done
  - Organize list in order of priority (essential vs. nonessential)
  - Have realistic expectations for finishing tasks
  - Assign some tasks to others

### Don't hesitate to ask for help at home:

- Accept help from family and friends:
  - Support with breastfeeding
  - Cooking meals
  - Laundry/ house cleaning
  - Help with caring for your baby/children

### Allow time to nurture yourself and alleviate fatigue:

- Rest when you can
- Sleep when the baby sleeps
- Try getting outside of the house for short periods for a walk or fresh air.



(Judidias, 2014)

### **Communication is key to a balanced life:**

- Try to spend special time (even if it's only a few minutes a day) alone with each older child to help them adjust to the new family addition
  - Allow them to tell you about how they feel about the new baby, to include all their frustrations
  - Give them the opportunity to ask questions
- Talk with family and friends about your labor and birth experience
- Continue to participate in activities and conversations with adult family and friends.



(Pixabay, 2016d)

### **Postpartum blues and depression**

You may experience the blues during your first 2 weeks postpartum. The most common symptoms of the blues are unexpected and unexplainable crying and irritability. They usually go away within 72 hours but can persist up to 10 days.

- If symptoms persist or become worse beyond 10 days you may be experiencing postpartum depression.
- It is important to note that postpartum depression can occur anytime during the first year after birth.
- Taking good care of yourself by sleeping as much as possible, eating well, getting help around the house, and getting sunshine and fresh air are excellent ways to ward off PPD.

### **How is postpartum blues different from postpartum depression?**

- It is normal to have some mood swings and tearfulness over the first 2 weeks after giving birth, as your body adjusts to different hormones and you adjust to the role of caring for a new baby.
- Postpartum depression warning signs:
  - Severe feelings of anxiety and unhappiness
  - Affects your ability to do daily activities
  - Thoughts of hurting yourself and/or your baby

**It is important to remember that postpartum blues is normal while you and your family adjust to your new baby.**

How you feel emotionally can be affected by:

- Feeling physically tired/lack of sleep
- Lack of support/help at home
- Relationship conflicts

## Couple relationship, and resuming sexuality

**“When is it okay to start having sex again?”** This can sometimes be a difficult question to ask, but it is common and a very important topic to address. **The answer is, there is no single answer.** This is a personal decision between you and your partner. Every birth experience is different for every woman; therefore, every woman will have a different comfort level.

Questions to ask yourself when deciding when the right time to have sex is:

- Has your bleeding decreased and/or stopped? Most women do not resume sexual activities until 6-8 weeks postpartum or longer. Listen to your body-you will know when you are healed and ready for sex again.
- Do you have any vaginal pain or discomfort. A lubrication can be very helpful as you return to sexual activity as vaginal dryness is common postpartum and exacerbated by nursing.?
- Are both you and your partner eager to resume having sex?
- Have you resumed contraception and/or family planning?



(Pexels, 2016)

Communication about how you feel between you and your partner is essential

- Be open to talking about intimacy and your emotional needs/interests
- Avoiding the subject can cause feelings of neglect, rejection, frustration, and disappointment
- There are various ways to express love and affection for one another, such as touching, holding or massaging

Spend time alone. Make time to laugh and talk to each other. The newborn period places unique strains on a relationship. It is important for both partners to try to be patient with themselves and each other, and to remember that this is a temporary stage.

## Family planning and contraception

If you and your partner feel ready to resume having sex, it is time to consider birth control. Contraception and/or family planning is important. There is no way to know for sure when you will restart your period and when you can become pregnant again. This is because this is because it can be hard to tell the difference between lochia spotting and the resumption of your period. It is best to have a discussion with your midwife at your 6 week postpartum appointment to discuss options for birth control that are best for you.

Various factors affect the return of your period:

- Breastfeeding can affect your hormones and postpone the return of your period. However, **breastfeeding is not a reliable form of birth control long term.**
- If you are bottle-feeding, you may restart your period 6 weeks after delivery.

**\*\*It is important to know that you can get pregnant before your first period/menses after giving birth.\*\***

## .....Newborn Care.....

### **Feeding your newborn**

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months after birth. If there is a reason the baby can not solely breastfeed, hand expressed or pumped breast milk is recommended before giving infant formula. Only breastmilk or infant formula should be given to the baby; extra water is not necessary nor is any other food for the first 6 months.

Breastfed newborns need to eat about every 2-3 hours or 8-12 times a day. However, they do not always eat on a strict 2 or 3 hour schedule. Some newborns may feed more often for a couple hours and then go a longer stretch before showing signs of hunger. This can be normal! The most important thing is that your baby eats at least 8-12 times a day.

#### **Infant feeding cues:**

- Be aware and look for cues or signs of hunger such as: waking up and sucking their fingers or fist, licking their lips and moving their head as if looking for a nipple, or becoming restless.
- Try to start the feeding before your baby begins crying, as crying is a late sign of hunger
- If the baby falls asleep or acts like they are done eating, burp them, and wait a few minutes before offering the other breast or bottle again. If they are not done eating they will most likely continue nursing after burping

### **Diaper care and counting your baby's output**

Newborns start out having black tarry bowel movements called meconium. You will notice these meconium stools generally for the first 1-2 days after birth. Meconium can be very sticky and hard to get off. If this is true for you, you can make diaper changing easier by using a soft wet cloth to help remove the poop. Do not use abrasive cloths or scrub the infant's bottom hard.

Once the baby starts feeding, their poop will start to change in color and consistency:

- Breastfed babies will have poop that is a liquidy, seedy, yellow-brown color soon after the breast milk comes in.
- Formula fed babies' poop will change to a thicker consistency and typically will be a brown color
- The number of wet and dirty diapers slowly increases each day for the first week.
- By the fifth day after birth, your baby should have around 6 wet diapers and at least 4 poopy diapers each day.

- Once your milk fully comes in and your supply increases, you may notice that your breastfed baby may even stool after almost every feed.
- While the umbilical cord is still attached, fold the diaper under so it doesn't cover the cord. Ideally the cord should stay clean and dry until it falls off on its own. This typically happens within the first 2 weeks after birth. Call your baby's healthcare provider if the umbilical cord stump has not fallen off by 8 weeks.

### **Bathing**

You do not need to give your baby a bath until you feel they need it. Until the umbilical cord stump falls off you should only give your baby a sponge bath. When the cord falls off, a baby tub or a padded sink can be used for baths.

Other tips:

- Keep a hand on the baby at all times. Gather your supplies before starting so you do not have to leave the area.
- During a sponge bath, wrap the baby in a towel and only uncover the areas being cleaned so the baby doesn't get cold.
- Test the water on your inner wrist to make sure it is not too hot before bathing the baby with it
- Clean the diaper area and bottom last and do not use that washcloth to clean other areas of the body.
- Water is usually enough. If needed, use a mild or newborn soap.
- After bathing, dry the newborn completely, making sure to get under skin folds such as around the neck, under the arms, and the groin. Make sure the umbilical cord is completely dry before diapering and dressing.



### **Sleep and Activity**

Your newborn will spend about 2 hours a day in a quiet but alert state. After that their behavior will continue to change and most likely will not follow a certain pattern until after the first month. He or she may sleep



for 16-18 hours a day, in the form of short naps. Then after a few months, most babies can combine 2-3 naps and sleep for longer stretches of time.

- Have your baby sleep in your room or close by and in his or her own crib.
- Keep the crib free of extra blankets or toys.
- Make sure to place the baby on his or her back to sleep.

**Call your pediatrician or the midwife if your baby:**

- has bowel movements that are mucousy, bloody, still black and tarry even several days after birth, white, or if they are more watery than usual.
- has no wet or dirty diapers in 24 hours.
- has urine that is orange or red
- has a yellow coloring to their skin and eyes
- isn't gaining weight or refuses to eat
- has red, warm, or swollen skin around the umbilical cord, if the cord is oozing pus or it has a bad odor.
- has a temperature of greater than 37.4 C (99.3 F) or less than 36.5 C (97.5 F)



(Serzhile, 2012)

**Temperament**

Your baby's temperament determines how they respond to everyday stimulation and interact with the people and environment around them.

Each baby has his or her own individual personality and temperament.

- You will typically pick up on some of these personality traits early on after your new baby is born
- You may notice that your baby may be laid-back, adaptable, and calm, or sensitive, high-strung, and irritable or any mix of these
- Just because your baby cries more or isn't as relaxed as another baby does not necessarily mean that you are doing anything wrong or that something is wrong with your baby!



(Lawton, R., 2013)

**"Help! My baby cries all of the time!"**

- It may seem like your baby cries more often than not, but typically most newborn babies only cry around 2-11% of the day.
- It is common for newborns to cry more often in the evening or at night.
- Most of the time when a baby cries it is because the baby is hungry, has a wet or soiled diaper that needs changing, wants to be held/comforted, is overstimulated, or is sleepy.

- To calm a crying baby you can try changing their diaper, holding and rocking them, feeding them, offering a pacifier, or swaddling them. Nursing can be one of the best ways to soothe a baby.
- You can also try skin to skin care when your baby is crying- undress your baby down to their diaper and lay them on your bare chest covered with a blanket- your warmth and the baby being close to you like this may help soothe them.
- Something important to keep in mind is that babies can feed off of the anxiety of their mothers or other caretakers around them.
- As you get to know your baby over the first couple of months you will learn more appropriately how to respond to their specific needs.
- Utilize the support you have around you, and let them help you if you are feeling overwhelmed.
- If you ever have thoughts about shaking or harming your baby when they are crying or upset place the baby on their back in their crib and walk away and get someone else to step in to care for the infant until you calm down. Never shake your baby!

### **Sibling adjustment**

You may notice a change in your child's behavior either during your pregnancy or after your new baby arrives. Remember, this is a big change for your child!

- Every child has their own personality and temperament, so each individual child may react differently when it comes to welcoming a new sibling into the family.
- You might notice that they are not listening like normal, acting out for attention, clinging to you, or even that they are regressing and acting the way they did when they were younger (thumb sucking, wetting the bed, throwing temper tantrums, etc.). All of these things can be very normal when adjusting to a new sibling.



(Mliu92, 2010)

There are some things you can do to try to help your child adjust before and after welcoming the new baby:

- Bring the child with you to some of your prenatal appointments so they can hear the heartbeat and so they can feel like they are part of the process with you
- Read books about becoming a big brother or sister with your child often during pregnancy and after the new baby comes home
- Talk with your child about how they feel about becoming a big brother or sister
- Let them feel your belly when the baby is moving or kicking
- Register your child for a class that helps them learn about being a sibling and how they can help with their new baby sister or brother
- Spend some extra special one-on-one time with the child once home with the baby to help them feel like they are not forgotten.
- Include the child in the daily routine with their new sibling and make them feel like they are helping and involved.

## .....Breastfeeding.....

### Why should I breastfeed my baby?

**Breastfeeding is good for both you and your baby!** Breast milk helps protect your baby from getting sick. Breastmilk provides babies with some protection from infections and diseases because the mother passes antibodies to the infant through the milk. These antibodies will help protect the infant against certain infections and diseases while the infant's immune system is still immature and unable to fully protect itself.

These antibodies from the mother's breast milk can help protect the infant during the first year. Breastfeeding also helps protect your child's health in the future—even when he or she is no longer nursing!



(Pixabay, 2016g)

Facts about breastfed babies:

- Breastfed babies are less likely to need to be hospitalized for lung infections. They are also less likely to get ear and throat infections, stomach infections, and colds.
- Babies who are breastfed are less likely to die from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)
- Children who are breastfed as babies are less likely to have allergies and asthma
- Children who are breastfed as babies are less likely to be overweight or obese when they become teenagers and adults, and are less likely to develop diabetes
- Children who are breastfed as babies are less likely to get certain kinds of childhood cancers
- Children who are breastfed receive higher average scores on intelligence tests because breastfeeding helps your baby's brain develop

### **Breastfeeding is good for you too!**

Some of the maternal benefits include:

- Less bleeding: when your baby nurses, it causes your uterus (womb) to tighten and come back to the size it was before you were pregnant. This causes you to have less bleeding from the uterus
- Bonding with your baby: breastfeeding is a great way for you to connect with and get to know your baby
- Breast milk is free and convenient. Always available, always the right temperature. No washing and sterilizing bottles, no mixing and warming formula
- Breastfeeding your baby may make it less likely that you have postpartum depression

- Breastfeeding can delay your period from returning
- Breastfeeding can even help make it less likely that you develop breast cancer in the future!

**Okay, I'm going to give this breast-feeding thing a try. How do I do it???**

So, where to start? Ideally, from the beginning, the first hour or two after your baby's birth.

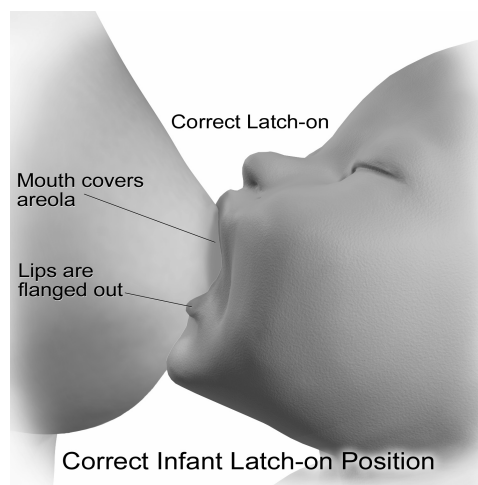
There is no one right way to breastfeed:

- As you get more comfortable and experienced with nursing your baby, you will find various positions that work for you.
- Be patient with yourself (and with your baby)! Just remember, you and your baby are both learning, and over time you will both become more skilled.
- Remember, the "right" way to breastfeed is any way that is comfortable for you and lets the baby latch on and get all the milk she needs.

Here are some steps to get you started:

- Get in a comfortable position. This can be sitting in a chair, lying on your back, or lying on your side.
- Hold your baby close to you, with his belly facing you so he doesn't have to turn his head to reach your breast.
- Bring the baby to your breast. Start with your nipple above the baby's mouth, just under his nose. When his mouth is wide open slide the nipple into the baby's mouth.
- Make sure you have a good latch. It is important that the baby gets as much of the nipple and the darker skin around the nipple (the areola) into his mouth as possible. Both lips should be out. It is normal to feel a strong tugging when the baby sucks, but it shouldn't feel pinching, sharp, or painful.
- Sometimes you have to try a few times to get a good latch. Just put your finger between the baby's mouth and your breast to break the seal, take her off, and try again.

**An example of a baby with a good latch. Baby is close to mother's body, lips are out, baby has a lot of the areola in her mouth.**



## What are some good positions for breastfeeding?

**Cradle position:** the mother holds the baby with the arm on the side the baby is nursing from, belly to belly. You may also place a pillow under the baby. Make sure your back is supported!



(O'Connor, 2015)

**Cross Cradle:** The mother holds the baby with the arm on the opposite side of the breast she is nursing from. She can hold her breast with the other hand. This gives more control of the breast and the baby's head, and can help if you are having trouble getting a good latch.

**Football hold:** In this position, the baby is tucked to your side and held by one arm on the side you are nursing from. You can use the other arm to help guide the breast. This position can be good if you've had a cesarean birth, since it does not put pressure on the incision.



**Side lying:** Mother lies on one side, with baby chest to chest. Baby's back can be supported by a small pillow or rolled up towel. Restful and relaxing position.

**Laid back/ supine position:** In this position, the mother is reclined on her back with her head and back supported by pillows. The baby lies belly to mother's chest. Can be relaxing for mother, and can let baby attach herself to the breast.



Supine Position

### **How long should my baby nurse?**

Let your baby nurse as long as she is actively sucking. When the baby stops nursing from one side, offer the other breast. Don't worry if the baby only nurses from one side at a time. Start with the other side next time. It is ok for the baby to nurse while sleeping, sometimes babies who can get frustrated with trying to latch do better getting on while they are half asleep.

### **How often should I feed my baby?**

You should try to feed your baby whenever she seems hungry. Most babies eat about 8-12 times a day, which averages to every 2-3 hours. However, these feedings might be clustered, meaning baby might eat every hour for several hours, then go 4 hours without eating, for example. Your body decides how much milk to make based on how much the baby eats, so the more often you feed your baby, the more milk you make. This means that it is important to feed your baby often.

### **How do I know my baby is getting enough milk?**

There is no way to see exactly how much milk your baby is getting with each feeding, but that's okay. There are other ways to tell if your baby is getting enough to eat:

- Does your baby have four or more wet and four or more poopy diapers every day once she is four days old or older?
- Does your baby seem sleepy and satisfied after a feeding?
- Is your baby gaining weight? It is normal for your baby to lose weight at first, but most babies get back to their birth weight by the time they are 1-2 weeks old

### **Is there anything I can do to make sure I make enough milk?**

Although it is common for new mothers to worry about not making enough milk, your body is perfectly designed to produce all the milk your baby needs. There is nothing special you need to do to produce more milk.

- The most important thing you can do is to feed your baby often, whenever you notice she is hungry. Your body gets the message to make more milk when the milk that was there is removed. The more milk out, the more your body makes.
- Stay well hydrated and eat regular meals that include protein, fruits and vegetables

### What happens when my milk “comes in”?

Your body makes baby’s first milk (called **colostrum**) while you are pregnant. This milk is yellow colored, and specially made for the first few days of your baby’s life, when his stomach has not relaxed yet and can only hold a tiny bit at a time.

- After a few days, your baby is ready to handle more fluid, and your body starts to make more milk. This milk is whiter in color, and there is a lot more of it.
- When this process starts around day 3 after your baby is born, you will notice that your breasts feel very full, and milk may leak from the nipples.
- **Engorgement:** when the breasts are so full of milk that it is uncomfortable, this is called engorgement. Fortunately, this feeling usually gets better after a day or two. The best thing to do is to try to feed your baby as often as possible. Call us if you develop a fever or areas of breast that are hot to the touch, red and tender.

### What do I do about sore nipples?

Usually, sore or painful nipples are caused when the baby is not latching on correctly. The best way to prevent nipple pain is to make sure that the baby is getting a good latch.

This means:

- The baby’s mouth is open wide when the nipple goes in.
- The baby’s lips are out, not tucked in.
- As much of the **areola** (darker skin around the nipple) is in the baby’s mouth as possible.
- There is not a slurping or sucking noise while the baby is nursing
- When the baby is done nursing, your nipple should come out looking round, not flattened or creased.



(Mother Touch, 2010)

If you are starting to have soreness or pain, do NOT just keep going and ignore it. Nipple pain is easier to fix if you catch it early. Here are some things to try:

- When you feel the pain, remove the baby from the breast by putting your finger between the nipple and the mouth to break the seal, and try again, attempting to get a deeper latch.
- Try feeding your baby in a different position.
- Keep your nipples clean (with water only, no soap) and dry

- It might help you to feel more comfortable to use a small amount of lanolin cream on dry nipples after a feeding. You can also squeeze out a little bit of colostrum or breastmilk and massage it into your areola and nipple area to help. Both of these are safe for the baby.

If you are still having pain when your baby nurses, or if you are having trouble getting a good latch, or are just not sure, see your healthcare provider!

### **Taking care of yourself while breastfeeding:**

**Nutrition:** There are no special foods that you need to eat or avoid when breastfeeding. Even if your diet is not perfect, your body will make healthy and nutritious milk for your baby. However, it is important that you eat a balanced healthy diet to help you feel good and recover from the birth as well as replacing the vitamins and minerals that go into the breast milk.



**Hydration:** Be sure to drink plenty of fluids (water is the best). You might notice that you feel really thirsty when you nurse your baby. Take time to get something to drink before you settle down to nurse, as it is common to get very thirsty when you are nursing.

**Rest:** It takes energy for your body to make milk. Try to get as much rest as possible, napping when the baby is sleeping. Use pillows and a footrest when you breastfeed to help yourself be as comfortable and relaxed as possible, to rest your body while you are doing the important work of feeding your baby.

**Activity:** It is important to balance activity with rest. It is safe to exercise while breastfeeding. Just make sure to wear a supportive bra (you might need a larger size than before you had your baby).

**Bras:** Make sure to wear a comfortable bra that fits well and does not pinch or feel too tight. It is best to wear soft, breathable fabrics like cotton and to avoid underwire bras while breastfeeding. Nursing bras, which unsnap to feed the baby, are available and can be helpful, but any comfortable bra that fits well is fine.

**Family involvement/ prioritizing:** Breastfeeding your baby is a gift that only you can give. This is a special relationship between a mother and her baby. However, sometimes it can feel overwhelming to the mother, and sometimes older children and even spouses and partners can feel left out. Here are some tips for involving the whole family:

- Older children can help mom feed the baby by bringing her water, pillows, etc. to set up the area for breastfeeding
- Many siblings like to pretend to feed a baby doll
- The baby's other parent may not be able to breastfeed the baby, but they can help out by holding and soothing the baby after and in between feedings.



