

NUTRI-NEWS - BREASTFEEDING

The First Few Weeks

Although breastfeeding is the natural way to feed your baby, it doesn't always happen automatically. In our society few women have observed a breastfeeding mother and child close-up. So it's not surprising that, when a new mother starts to breastfeed, she faces doubts and frustrations.

Here are some concerns commonly expressed by mothers in the early weeks.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH MILK?

You're not alone! Many mothers wonder if they have enough milk, but be assured that insufficient milk production is very rare. Because it's not possible to measure the amount baby drinks, mothers can look for other signs. For the exclusively breastfed baby, 6 or more wet diapers per day is a sign that baby is getting enough milk. "Test weighing" the baby before and after each feed is not recommended because it is inaccurate and increases mother's anxiety. The baby's steady weight gain from week to week is the most reliable way of determining the adequacy of mother's milk supply.

MY BABY WANTS TO NURSE 12 TIMES A DAY! HOW OFTEN IS IT "NORMAL" TO NURSE?

Each baby sets his or her own normal pace. Don't feel that you should follow a strict time table. Often newborns need to nurse every 2 hours but as baby grows, his/her stomach capacity increases and the digestive system can cope with more milk. By the time some infants are two or three weeks old, a three-hour interval may satisfy their needs. But don't be surprised if the baby continues to need nourishment more often.

SOME DAYS MY BABY SEEMS SO HUNGRY.

Maybe my milk is drying up? Expect appetite "ups and downs". Babies get hungry during growth spurts - often during the second week, at five to six weeks and at three months of life. At these times, the baby needs more milk. You can supply the demand by nursing more often than usual for a couple of days. Amazingly, your milk production will increase to satisfy baby.

Wouldn't it be easier to supplement with a bottle of formula? No. It may seem like the solution, but there is a danger. If the formula is used before breastfeeding is well established, your milk supply can be reduced. Remember the law of "supply and demand" - if you don't use it, you lose it! After the milk supply is well established (at about 6 weeks), the occasional back-up bottle is less likely to affect breastfeeding success.

HOW LONG SHOULD I NURSE AT EACH FEEDING?

Individual infants vary in their sucking behaviour and the length of time they want to nurse. Some are vigorous, active feeders, while others are more placid. Generally, an infant should be allowed to nurse until satisfied since the breast offers comfort as well as nourishment. Exceptions include the mother who develops sore nipples or who is exhausted or overwhelmed from very long, frequent feedings. If this is the case the nursing session need not exceed 20 minutes.

I HAVE SORE NIPPLES. WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE SORENESS?

It is common in the first few days of breastfeeding for mothers to experience discomfort. Later, when the milk supply is well established, soreness is reduced. If soreness persists, it's a good idea to review what you're doing - the position of the baby at the breast as well as care of the nipples.

CHECK POSITIONING: The baby should be facing you so that the nipple is directly in front of his/her mouth and he/she doesn't have to turn the head to reach it. Pull the baby very close to your body. This is important for placing the nipple well back in the baby's mouth. If the baby's jaws grasp only the nipple, less milk is extracted and nipples become sore.

CHECK BREAST CARE: Wash breasts with water only, once a day is sufficient; air dry nipples before replacing bra; avoid waterproof bra liners (which reduce air circulation) and paper tissues. Cream can be applied sparingly after the nipples are dry; choose creams that don't need to be washed off before feedings (i.e. lanolin, vitamin A and D, cocoa butter or vitamin E).

I'VE BEEN BREASTFEEDING FOR SIX WEEKS NOW AND EVERYONE AROUND ME SAYS THAT'S LONG ENOUGH. MAYBE I SHOULD SWITCH TO BOTTLE-FEEDING? You've come a long way in the first six weeks! Chances are that the best is yet to come - you're more experienced and more confident. As your baby gets older, you'll find breastfeeding is less work than formula preparation would be and you'll feel less tied down.

The decision as to how long you'll breastfeed is highly personal. Factors such as returning to work, family and friends' support and your feelings and attitudes about breastfeeding will all influence the decision you make. Ideally, breast milk should be the only source of nutrients for most infants for the first 4-6 months of life. Breastfeeding gives the infant the best possible foundation for future health.

Help is available if you need more information or moral support while breastfeeding. Whether it's a simple question you'd like answered, or if you need encouragement to get through a frustrating day, you'll get help from your local Health unit or La Leche League. Don't hesitate to call!

Prepared by Public Health Nutritionists in Ontario (Near East Region). Distributed by Christina Healey, Community Nutritionist, Leeds, Grenville and L'nark District Health Unit, March 1986.

**SOUTH CROSBY BRANCH
Rideau Lakes Union Library**

While we still have a few cartons of shelving stored and the vertical file material is somewhat "backed-up" we are pleased to report that LIGHT is once again in all areas of the Adult room. Many of our patrons must have thought we were attempting our own version of "conservation" as several of the stack areas were slightly dim if not downright dark! Upon request South Crosby Council agreed to the installation of several units of new lighting and the electrician has finally completed the job. I am sure both staff and patrons alike wish to extend their thanks to the Council for approving the job and to the electrician for finally "getting on with it". Drop in and visit the library....you can now see where you are going...and best of all, what you wish to read!

SUFFERING FROM "TAX-TIME BLUES"

??????????????

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