

Tips on How to Get the **BEST** **START** WITH **BREASTFEEDING**

Information for Pregnant Women and New Families

To help you and your baby get the best start with breastfeeding, begin breastfeeding after birth as soon as you are able.

Your milk is the best nutrition for your baby.

Feeding a baby with breast milk only helps make a baby the healthiest he or she can be. To make sure your baby gets the best start in life, feed your baby breast milk only for the first 6 months of life unless your baby's health care provider recommends otherwise. If your baby's provider does recommend that you supplement your baby with formula, ask to see a breastfeeding specialist (a Lactation Consultant) to help make sure you are breastfeeding as well as can be. Before giving any other type of milk to your baby (donor breast milk or formula), see if you can pump/express your breast milk and feed this milk first to your baby.

Spend lots of time with your baby skin-to-skin.

This means holding your baby close so that as much of your baby's skin touches as much of your skin as possible. Skin-to-skin contact helps your baby have the healthiest start in life. By doing skin-to-skin:

- Your baby will be calmer and more content.
- Your baby will feed better.
- Your baby will have the healthiest body temperature, blood sugar and oxygen level, and breathing and heart rate.
- Skin-to-skin contact also helps your milk "let down" during feeding and helps you make more milk. It also helps your uterus contract more after birth which helps limit bleeding.



The earliest time after delivery is when a baby is most alert and will often feed the best. Soon after, it is common for a baby to become sleepy and less interested in feeding.

Breastfeed your baby early and often.

This means feeding your baby at least 8-10 times per day (even up to 12 times per day is normal and healthy). Feeding your baby often makes sure your baby gets all of the benefits of your breast milk, and makes sure your baby gets the most breast milk possible. It also helps your milk come in sooner and with the best supply. When babies breastfeed 8-10 times per day, they lose less weight than if they feed less often. They are also less likely to have high levels of jaundice (a yellow color of the skin).

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Feed your baby when he or she shows early feeding or hunger cues.

Your baby will show you he or she is hungry by making mouth movements, or by licking the lips or bringing hands to the mouth. Offer breastfeeding any time your baby shows these cues. If your baby decides not to feed, that is ok. Keep your baby close to you in skin-to-skin contact while you wait for your baby to eat.

Room-in with your baby day and night.

This will help you learn your baby's needs and feeding cues. Being close to your baby also helps you respond to these needs and cues early. Responding early to these cues helps your baby feed as well as possible. It also helps your baby stay calm and comfortable. Rooming-in will also help you feel more comfortable and confident in caring for your baby on your own. This will help prepare you for when you go home with your baby. It is very important that you are not separated from your baby in the hospital unless there is a medical reason to do so.

Limit visitors in the first few days after delivery to give you and your baby private time to get to know each other. This will also help give you some quiet time to work on breastfeeding. Limiting visitors in the first few days also helps give you protected time to **sleep when your baby sleeps**. This extra rest is very important as babies are often hungriest and most awake at night – just when you want to sleep.

Ask a nurse or lactation consultant to watch you and your baby breastfeed. Ask if they can teach you how to position your baby and how to know if your baby is latching well.

Ask your baby's nurse, doctor, or lactation consultant for **information on who you can contact after you go home** from the hospital. This information will be helpful if you have questions or any concerns about breastfeeding after discharge. Ask if there are any breastfeeding support groups in your area such as a breastfeeding peer support group, or if you qualify for the WIC peer counseling breastfeeding program. Knowing other mothers who breastfeed can be a strong source of support in the early weeks and months of your baby's life.

Adapted from materials developed by the NH's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding program, and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center-Lebanon Baby Friendly Task Force and Women's Health Resource Center with their permission