



Breastfeeding Questions

1. How often should I breastfeed my baby?

Breastfed babies tend to eat more often than formula fed babies, usually 8-12 times per day. The reason for this is that their stomachs empty much faster because human milk is easy to digest. When your baby is hungry, she may show the rooting reflex, put her hands to her mouth or nuzzle against your breast. It is best not to wait until your baby is crying or overly hungry. Some newborns may want to feed every 90 minutes (90 minutes from beginning of feeding to the beginning of the next feeding, this is known as “cluster feeds”).

2. How soon can I breastfeed my baby after birth?

Immediately.

3. How will I know if my baby is getting enough milk?

If your baby's growth is consistent with healthy weight gain, this is a great sign of adequate milk production. Soft breasts after a breastfeeding session and plenty of wet diapers (5-6) each day are also signs that your baby is getting enough to eat.

4. Should I supplement breastmilk with formula?

Most babies receive enough nutrition through breast milk as shown by healthy weight gain. Sometimes the available breast milk is not sufficient for healthy growth and the baby may need supplemental formula. This can be determined by your baby's doctor.

5. Can I breastfeed if my nipples are inverted or flat?

Yes, you can breastfeed with flat or inverted nipples! You may need to use a nipple shield during the first few days or longer while you and your baby are learning to nurse.

6. Is breastfeeding good for my baby?

Absolutely, human milk provides almost all the nutrients your baby needs to be healthy for up to six months (See below about vitamin D.) Breastmilk is rich with antibodies (proteins that fight infection). It has been called, “baby's first vaccine”. Because of the protective substances in human milk, breastfed babies are less likely to have ear infections, vomiting, diarrhea, pneumonia, meningitis, develop allergies or asthma. Research also shows breast milk is easier to digest than formula, it does not need to be prepared ahead of time and it has no cost. Research shows breastfeeding may help protect your baby from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

7. Should I give my baby vitamin D or fluoride supplements?

Breast milk does not provide infants with an adequate intake of active vitamin D. Vitamin D prevents rickets in babies. It is recommended to give 400iu of Vitamin D daily starting at 2 weeks of age. Fluoride and Iron is needed at 6 months of age for exclusively breast fed babies. This is a good time to start solids. When the baby gets their first tooth.

8. Is breastfeeding good for me?

Yes, breastfeeding burns more calories and helps you get back to your pre-pregnancy weight more quickly and helps the uterus contract to return to its regular size. It reduces the risk of ovarian cancer and it can reduce the risk of breast cancer. Breastfeeding helps to build bone strength and protect against fractures in old age.

9. How should a breastfeeding mom eat?

The key is to eat a balanced diet. Don't be afraid to eat a variety of foods and spices. It is very important to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and to stay on your prenatal vitamins. (See below for information about what to avoid.)

10. Can I drink tea, coffee, and soda with caffeine?

Babies have difficulty metabolizing caffeine, so you should limit your caffeine intake. Caffeine may make your baby irritable or cause difficulty sleeping. You should also check with your doctor to see if any medications you are taking contain caffeine.

11. Can I drink alcohol while breastfeeding?

Most women choose not to drink alcohol when breastfeeding to eliminate any risk to their baby. Also many women have a low tolerance since drinking in pregnancy is never recommended. Some women have an occasional beverage for special events while breastfeeding. It is best to consume the alcoholic beverage right after you pump or feed your baby. Remember, moderation is key. Be very careful with drinking. Remember for every alcoholic beverage (1 ounce of liquor, 4-6 ounces of wine, one 12 ounce beer) consumed, you should wait 3 hours before you breast feed your baby. This gives your body time to metabolize the alcohol.

12. Is it okay to take OTC and/or prescribed medications?

Many mothers need to take medications during breastfeeding. Although many drugs are safe to use when you're breastfeeding, most will get into your milk to some degree and may even affect your milk supply. To be safe, check with your child's doctor before taking any kind of medication, even over-the-counter drugs.

13. Is it OK to color, perm, relax, etc. my hair?

Yes, it is okay to get your hair done. Studies have shown that even if these chemicals get passed on to your baby, they are in quantities too negligible to have any effect on your baby. Go ahead and get your hair done, just make sure you aren't feeding your baby while you do it.

14. Is it true that breastfeeding will cause my breasts to sag?

NO, breastfeeding does NOT cause your breasts to sag. Stretching, which happens during pregnancy, may lead to sagging breasts post partum whether you breastfeed or not. Aging, genetics, and smoking all lead to sagging breasts. All breasts eventually sag whether you breastfeed or not.

15. How can I avoid sore nipples/breasts?

The best way to avoid sore nipples/breast is a good latch. Talk with your doctor, there are some creams and ointments that are available while you work on positioning and latch.

16. How can I make All Purpose Nipple Ointment at home?

Mix equal parts hydrocortisone 0.1% ointment, polysporin ointment, and lotrimin ointment. All of these items can be purchased over the counter at your local pharmacy.

17. How can I tell if my baby is latched well?

- You can see the pink of the baby's lips (lips are turned outward rather than tucked in)
- You hear swallowing after baby sucks a few times
- Baby's ears are wiggling (with active, vigorous sucking the muscles in front of the ears move)
- Baby's tongue is over his lower gum forming a trough around the nipple (you can check this by gently pulling down on baby's lower lip)
- Milk does not leak much from the corners of baby's mouth

18. My baby is having trouble latching, what can I do to make it easier?

- Get in a comfortable chair with great back support to feed your baby. Using a stool to rest your feet on will help with good posture and prevent you from straining your neck and shoulders.
- Use your breastfeeding support pillow if you have one. (And if you don't, use whatever kind of pillows you can find to help support you and the baby. Firm pillows are best.) A good breastfeeding pillow can make a huge difference in getting the baby in a proper position to latch well.
- Make sure your baby is tummy-to-tummy with you at all times.
- Make sure you bring your baby to you, and do not try to lean into the baby.
- Remember to keep your baby's ear, shoulder, and hip in alignment, which will make swallowing easier. The baby's nose should be opposite the nipple.
- You might need to hold your breast to help guide the nipple to your baby's mouth. Grasp the breast on the sides, using either a "C" hold or "U" hold. Make sure to keep fingers far from the nipple so you don't affect how baby latches on.
- Aim the nipple toward the baby's upper lip/nose, not the middle of the mouth. You might need to gently rub the nipple across the top lip to get your baby to open his/her mouth.
- The baby's head should be tilted slightly back. You do not want his chin to his chest.
- When he opens his mouth wide with the chin dropped and tongue down, he should latch on to the nipple. If he does not open wide, do not try to shove the nipple in. It is best to move back, tickle the lip again with the nipple and wait for a wide open mouth.

- Try to get as much of the lower portion of the areola (the area around the nipple) in the baby's mouth.
- The baby's chin should indent the lower portion of your breast.

19. What is mastitis?

Mastitis is a breast infection caused by the blocking of the milk ducts. It can cause painful, hot, red, tender and swollen areas on the breasts or nipples and may lead to a fever or flu-like symptoms. It is not necessary to wean because of mastitis; in fact, nursing is the most effective way to remove the blockage and alleviate the symptoms. Nursing with mastitis is not harmful to the baby. If you need medication to treat your mastitis, be sure to have your doctor choose an antibiotic that is safe for your baby. Sudden weaning can cause or exacerbate mastitis symptoms. Gently massage the area of tenderness. This increases circulation and helps to loosen any plugged ducts in the area. Try doing this while soaking the breast in a warm shower or bath.

20. I want to return to work, when do I start pumping and storing milk? How long can I store it in the freezer? How do I defrost it?

You should start pumping once a day a few weeks before returning to work. Breast milk can be stored in the refrigerator for 5 days and in the freezer for 6 months. Defrosting breast milk should always be done in a cup of warm water. You may need to change the water a few times until the desired temperature is achieved. Never defrost or warm breast milk in a microwave or boiling water. This destroys the antibodies in breast milk.

21. When should I introduce a bottle to my baby? What about nipple confusion?

Nipple "confusion" isn't really confusion; the baby knows the difference between a breast and a bottle. He just quickly figures out that the milk comes faster from a bottle than from a breast and decides he prefers the easier route. It is best to wait until baby is breastfeeding really well before introducing a bottle. This may be about 6 weeks for some or more or less for others. Some babies who are having problems with gaining weight may need a bottle earlier for a short time.

22. What if my baby is allergic to my breast milk?

Breast milk is the most natural food you can give your baby. If a baby shows sensitivities related to feeding, it is usually a foreign protein (cow's milk protein or soy protein are some examples) that has piggybacked into breastmilk, not the breast milk itself. This can usually be easily resolved by removing the offending food from mom's diet for a period of time and gradually reintroduced at a later date.