

GETTING BREASTFEEDING OFF TO A GOOD START

If you plan to partially or exclusively breastfeed your baby here is some information to help you in the first few hours and days of baby's life - a key time in establishing your milk supply.

The videos referenced can be found on the website www.globalhealthmedia.org.

Colostrum

Colostrum is the first milk produced. There is much less of it than the mature milk that comes in about three to four days after the baby is born - the small volume allows the baby to get used to using it's stomach.

Colostrum is nature's first super food. There are many antibodies in colostrum to help the baby's immune system get started. The baby's immune system functions optimally with colostrum and breastmilk.

The First Feed

Ideally, the baby goes on your chest right after being born and stays there until after the first feed.

The baby has many instincts and abilities that can allow them to find a good first latch themselves. A good video to watch is: *'Breastfeeding in the First Hours'*

You can also help the baby find the breast when she starts rooting and looking for the breast.

Taking colostrum from the breast in the first hour is an important cue for your breasts to produce a full milk supply for your baby. Many studies show that women who get colostrum out of the breast in the first hour make up to 40% more milk!

If you baby does not breastfeed in the first hour you can hand express and feed baby this colostrum with a syringe, spoon or your finger.

A Good Latch

A deep latch is key to pain-free breastfeeding and helps the baby get the most milk from the breast.

A good video to watch is: *'Attaching your baby at the breast'*

Skin-to-Skin

Spend lots of time holding your baby wearing only a diaper right against your chest.

Baby will be soothed by spending time skin-to-skin with any caregivers (including dad, siblings, grandparents etc...).

However, prioritize skin-to-skin time with mom during the first few days as this will increase hormonal levels that help you to make more milk.

Hand Expression

Hand expression is a useful skill that you may have learned in pregnancy to collect colostrum. Most women find colostrum is easier to express by hand, while mature milk can be expressed by hand or with a pump.

Studies show that hand expression in the first three days of life can help your milk to come in. For the first few days, it is a good idea to hand express after breastfeeding to help make a good milk supply, especially if you are having any difficulties latching your baby.

Hand express at least 5-6 times a day for the first few days. Express on one side for about a minute and then the other - back and forth for a total of 5 minutes. You can feed these first few drops to baby.

Breastfeeding Positions

There are many different positions that you can try for breastfeeding. A good video to watch is: *'Positions for breastfeeding'* Swaddling baby tightly can interfere with seeing baby's early feeding cues. It is important to let baby have access to their hands so they can show us when they are starting to get hungry.

Watch the Baby, Not the Clock

It is normal for babies to feed very often at first. Their feeds will become more spaced out and predictable as they get older.

The best way to determine when and for how long to feed your baby is by looking at baby:

- watching for hunger cues
- looking and listening to them at the breast to determine when and how well they are transferring milk
- assessing after they finish nursing to determine whether they have had enough to eat

A good video to watch is: *'Is Your Baby Getting Enough Milk'*