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BREAST-FEEDING YOUR BABY

Breast-feeding provides your new baby with good nutrition and helps develop a close bond between you and your infant. Breastmilk also contains antibodies (substances that help protect your baby against some diseases). Breastmilk for the sick or fragile baby can be like "medicine" for your baby. Babies who are fed with breastmilk are generally healthier and have fewer allergic problems (like eczema and asthma). They have fewer ear infections, digestive problems, and are hospitalized less often than those fed with prepared formulas or other milks. Breastmilk may also provide some protection from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Breast-feeding gives a sense of warmth, closeness, and pleasure to both your baby and the mother. But it doesn't happen by instinct as it does in animals. Mothers need to understand the process to be successful. The following tips may help you.

FIRST, TRY TO RELAX

Try to be as relaxed as possible. If you are tense and nervous, it will interfere with the "milk let-down" and the flow of milk. Select a comfortable chair or lie down if you prefer. Cradle your baby on your forearm.

Picture 1 Relax and enjoy this special time with baby.

HELPING YOUR BABY LEARN TO SUCK

Hold your baby with his tummy to yours. Baby's ear, shoulder, and hip should be in a straight line.

- Press in and let go a few times on the areola (a-REE-oh-lah), the dark outer part of the nipple. This will help start the flow of milk.
- Stroke your baby's upper lip with your nipple. The stroking will cause your baby to open his mouth wide to find the nipple.
- Teach your baby to "latch on" with his tongue down and mouth wide open.
- It will take a little time for your baby to learn how to get a large part of the areola into his mouth. When he learns to do this, he will start pressing on the areola with his tongue and gums while sucking on the nipple. This action will make the milk flow.
- At first let your baby breast-feed on both breasts at each feeding. The sucking helps to stimulate milk supply. To keep the milk supply equal in both breasts, start with the opposite breast at each feeding. For example, at 8:00 am let your baby nurse from the right breast, then the left breast. At 11:00 am start with the left breast, then the right breast. Let your baby nurse on the first breast as long as possible so your baby gets your "hind milk" which has the most fat and calories.
- Your baby may need more sucking time later. It is fine to let your baby suck longer. Every baby has her own style. One baby may nurse quickly and finish a breast in 10 minutes. Another may need to nurse 20 minutes on each breast.

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BURPING

- Your baby may swallow air while breast-feeding. This air should be brought up or "burped" to prevent stomach pain. To remove the air bubbles, sit your baby on your lap and support his head with your hand. With your other hand, gently pat or rub his back. After you hear a burp, continue feeding your baby. A little milk may come out with the burp, so have a clean cloth ready.
- Try to burp your baby after he has finished one breast. Burp again after he finishes nursing on the other side.

FEEDING SCHEDULE

- Breast-fed babies eat more often than formula-fed babies do. This is because breastmilk is easier for babies to digest. Your baby will need to be breast-fed every 1 to 3 hours at first. In time your baby will let you know when she is hungry.
- Night feedings must be given during the first few months of life. Remember that your baby will outgrow this need. Try to relax and enjoy the quiet time with her during the night nursing.
- You will know if your baby is getting the right amount of milk by her weight. Most babies gain 4 to 7 ounces per week for about the first 6 months. Talk with your doctor if you are concerned about your child's weight. If your baby is getting enough to eat, she should have at least six wet diapers and one bowel movement each day.

SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDINGS

Avoid bottle feedings during the first 3 weeks. However, when you need to be away from your baby for a few hours, you may substitute a bottle feeding (breastmilk in the bottle is best). Bottle feedings may be needed when baby stays with a baby-sitter (or you can try to leave and go home between feeding times). Your baby may be fed breastmilk or formula from the bottle, but doctors recommend that babies receive breastmilk during the first 12 months.

PUMPED BREASTMILK

- You can pump your breasts and leave this milk to be fed to your baby while you are away.
- When pumping your breasts, collect all the milk in one sterile container. Then pour the milk into sterile baby bottles in the amounts your infant usually takes at one feeding. Start with 2 to 3 ounces per bottle for a baby up to 3 months of age. Refer to the Helping Hand, *Breast Care and Expressing Milk,* HH-IV-61.
- The breastmilk may be refrigerated for 5 to 7 days. It can be frozen in a refrigerator freezer for up to 3 months, and in a deep freeze for up to one year. Frozen milk should be thawed in a container of warm water. Keep thawed milk in the refrigerator. Throw away any unused milk after 24 hours. **Do not refreeze thawed milk.**
- **Do not microwave breastmilk!** This can destroy the parts of the milk that protect your baby from illness. And it could burn your baby's mouth!

BREAST CARE

- Wash your breasts with clear water and pat dry.
- Leave breasts open to the air a few times a day to help prevent sore nipples.
- Wear a bra that gives your breasts good support. Wear the bra all the time, even to bed.

- If your nipples get sore or cracked, dab breastmilk around the nipple and areola while nursing your baby. There are natural ingredients in breastmilk that help heal sore nipples. If your nipples are still sore after the first few days, it may be caused by the position of your baby at the breast. Contact your doctor or a lactation consultant for help.

YOUR NUTRITION

- Mothers who breast-feed should have more calories and protein each day than they would normally need (Picture 2). Eating an extra meal each day (such as a sandwich, a piece of fruit, and a glass of milk) adds more calories for energy and protein to the diet. Meat, fish, milk, and cheese are all high in protein. Many mothers naturally lose extra weight gained during pregnancy while breast-feeding.
- Eating the right foods and drinking plenty of liquids will help keep milk production up. Drink enough liquids to keep your urine pale yellow.
- While you are sitting down to nurse your baby it's a good time to drink a glass of water or juice.

Picture 2 Nursing mothers need more calories, protein, and liquids in their daily diets.

MENSTRUATION

Your menstrual periods may stop during the time you are breast-feeding. However, if you do not want to become pregnant, ask your doctor to suggest the birth control method that is best for you.

MEDICATIONS

- Avoid using medications when possible. This includes herbs, high dose vitamins, and unusual supplements. Keep caffeine intake to a minimum. Alcohol is a drug and nursing mothers should avoid drinking alcohol.
- Most prescription drugs are safe to use, but be sure to check with your doctor, pharmacist, or lactation specialist.

SMOKING

Smoking in the same room with your baby is harmful to your baby. It increases the risk that your child will have more colds, respiratory problems, and possibly SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Smoking more than 10 cigarettes a day decreases a mother's milk supply. (For more information, refer to the Helping Hand, *Secondhand Smoke*, HH-IV-68.)

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor, nurse, or lactation consultant.