

10 Things You Should Know About Your First Week of Breastfeeding

Posted by [cbplaner](#) on April 25, 2012



I feel like one of the reasons that women often do not breastfeed as long as they potentially could is due to the fact that they are not always given the most honest information about what breastfeeding will be like during the first few days of nursing. I think because so many doctors, midwives, pediatricians, mothers and friends want a woman to breastfeed as long as possible, they often sugarcoat the reality of breastfeeding in order to persuade a new mother to give it a try.

And that really isn't fair. It is especially unfair when that new mom feels like a failure because she is having pain, discomfort and uncertainty while doing something that everyone else described as simple, easy and the best thing to do for your baby. That is when dishonesty leads to fewer babies being

breastfed to 3 months, 6 months, 1 year and beyond.

I was very lucky as I had a solid breastfeeding support group. Formula was totally alien and foreign to me, so the thought of learning how to formula feed just seemed bizarre to me. But I realize that some women don't have that same support group. And successful breastfeeding requires support. It really does.

So here is my Top 10 List of Things Mothers Should Know About That First Week of Breastfeeding:

1. That first latch might hurt a bit...and by might I mean it probably will. And that is totally OK and NORMAL. It will get better and eventually, when done properly, won't hurt at all.
2. People are going to see your boobs. It will happen. Lactation consultants, relatives, friends etc. are all probably going to see some skin while you are at the hospital and during your first several months of breastfeeding somewhat constantly. Trust me, this will be the one time nobody will care that your tatas are hanging out in a room full of people. Your new baby will be a thousand times more interesting.
3. Your milk might not "come in" right away, even if you have been leaking during your pregnancy. Don't freak out if it hasn't shown up in full on your little one's birthday. Give it a few days. Your baby will be fine noshing on colostrum in the meantime.
4. Don't stress yourself out about your milk coming in. The majority of women in this world are able to breastfeed. Stressing yourself out over your supply will not help your supply at all. Remember, supply is just part of the equation. You also need demand. The more you allow your baby to nurse, the more milk your body will create to meet his/her demand. See more information about supply in the resources section listed below.

5. When your milk does come in, it might be uncomfortable...and by might I mean it probably will. And that is totally OK and NORMAL. Yes, your boobs will grow to be even more ginormous than they already have grown to be, but they will die back down once your supply and demand levels out.

6. Yes, your baby is going to want to camp out at your boobs. And that is totally normal and OK. Yes, if you talk to a woman who formula feeds, the amount of time your baby eats in comparison to hers is going to seem like a lot. But you cannot compare the two. A baby breastfeeds to eat, establish milk supply and for comfort. A baby is given a bottle to eat only and has no supply to establish. You really cannot compare the two, so don't.

7. Having a baby want to nurse ALL. DAY. LONG. is frustrating. If this is your first child, you are probably use to being able to do things when you want to and are probably not use to having an extra appendage that cries, poops, sleeps and eats all day long. It is OK to feel frustrated because just like your labor did not last forever, this stage will not last forever either. Allow yourself to feel frustrated and take breaks when you need them.

8. Just like that first latch may have hurt; the next several dozen will probably hurt too. But this is what you need to pay attention to. During that first week and possibly beyond, each initial latch may hurt, but once your baby gets going, the pain should reduce and eventually go away. If that initial sting, that can at times knock the wind out of you, lasts through an entire feed, you probably have a bad latch. A lactation consultant can be a great resource for you if you are struggling with latching issues.

9. Engorgement. I won't lie. Engorgement is kind of a bitch. Having your boobs balloon up and ache from your milk coming in sucks. But this is again all part of supply and demand. I have always allowed my babies to nurse on demand and have yet to feel engorged for more than a few days. Pumping, showering and hand expression are all tricks that I have used to ease engorgement in addition to nursing on demand.

10. Let down pain is a type of shooting/tingling pain that you will feel in your boobs when your milk is literally letting itself down to feed. Again, it feels uncomfortable, but the discomfort is allayed once you feed your child. With both of my children, I eventually quit having any sort of letdown pain whatsoever.

Breastfeeding is like anything else in the world. It has a learning curve. There is a bit of a science to it. It comes easier to some than others. But if you put in the work, you and your baby can and will reap its benefits. I am not a doctor, a lactation consultant or anything else that requires a fancy title. But I have successfully breastfed my firstborn for a year, and I am 11 months in to breastfeeding my second child.

Despite having breastfeeding support, the number one thing that has allowed me to be successful at breastfeeding is my attitude. I never looked at it as something that I would “just try.” I looked at it as something that would just become a part of my life. And it did. All the advice in the world will not guarantee that a woman will have a successful breastfeeding experience. But what will almost always guarantee that a woman fails at breastfeeding is not being honest about what the journey will be like. It can be a rough road. Things will hurt. At times, you will probably feel awkward or uncomfortable. But such is life in general.

Remember, everything in life is temporary. The pain and discomfort will subside and your baby will thrive on your milk whether you breastfeed for a day, a week, a month or a year.

Resources: [The Normal Course of Breastfeeding ... Breastfeeding Challenges in the Early Days \(Resources\) ... Milk Supply ... Baby Explains- Normal Newborn Behavior](#)

Disclaimer: This post is not intended to dispense medical advice.

The First Week of Breastfeeding

Set yourself up for success in the early days of breastfeeding. The most important steps are:

- ❖ **Use Laid-Back Breastfeeding Approach.**
 - **Work on good latch.** Feed before the baby is overly roused. Mamma needs to be well supported and be completely comfortable. Show him/her your wide Open Mouth; wait for imitation. Hold him belly to belly, nose to nipple. Aim the nipple above his top lip and let the rest fall into the back of his mouth. Allow your baby time to locate your breast and latch on comfortably.
 - **Let him nuzzle for 20-30 seconds.** If it pinches, check to see that the lower lip is flipped out. If it is and there is still pain, release the suction and try again. Release deep breaths. This is a learned art for MOTHER.
 - **Fill'r up!** Use the daylight hours to provide the majority of your newborn's calorie requirements. Decide on odd or even hours – and from the moment you first wake up – determine to put your baby to breast at least every 2 hours until bedtime. Use the sling to wear your baby skin-to-skin (diaper only, mom undressed) Use hand compression at the end of every feeding to encourage emptying of the breast
 - **For night nursings, only change poopoo diapers:** resist flirting with your baby at night; use side-lying position in your bed. Sleep.

- ❖ **Spend as much time as possible in skin to skin.** Having skin to skin time with your baby has amazing effects on the both of you. Science has proven that skin to skin contact with mom and baby stabilizes baby's temperature and heart rate, helps mother identify early feeding cues, and helps mother bond more deeply with her baby. Get comfy in a recliner or bed, have baby down to diaper and lay her on your chest heart to heart. You can put a blanket over her back and just relax. Baby may rouse and search for the breast or may fall comfortably to sleep with the familiar sound of your beating heart.

- ❖ **Build your portable nursing nest.** Whether you decide to have a special place to nurse your baby or nurse in different locations throughout the house, having a basket of self-care items within hand's reach is invaluable. Here's a list of things you may want to include in your portable nursing nest:
 - Water bottle – If you forget it, you will feel like you just trekked through the Sahara...
 - Healthy snacks – High protein, high fiber, tasty snacks to keep you satisfied...
 - Cell phone – You will get very adept at texting while nursing...
 - iPod, mp3 Player – Relaxing music...increased relaxation helps those breastfeeding hormones flow better...
 - Burp cloth – For little spits and leaking milk...
 - Breast pads – Disposable or reusable...
 - Lanolin – Your choice of nipple cream, such as Earth Mama or MotherLove, coconut oil, or other all-natural ingredients...
 - Book/Magazine – Or these days, Kindle, Nook or eReader...
 - This is YOUR time with YOUR baby...learning together...slow down, relax and enjoy!

- ❖ **Learn about how to know your baby is feeding well.** One of the biggest concerns new mothers have is whether or not their baby is getting enough from breastfeeding. Following are some signs to look for:
 - Your baby has adequate diaper output.
 - Your baby wakes to nurse on their own.
 - Your baby is alert and active when feeding.
 - You hear or see baby swallowing as they feed.
 - Your baby is gaining weight well.
 - You may also notice your breast feel softer after a feeding and/or you may notice a let down during a feeding or milk dripping from the other breast.

- ❖ **Find or recruit a support system.** One of the major reasons women quit breastfeeding before they expect to is a lack of support from family and friends, and research tells us the spouse/partner plays the biggest role. If you are struggling in the early weeks, having family members and supportive friends to lean on and who will encourage you will help you reach your breastfeeding goals. Breastfeeding support groups, like La Leche League or hospital based groups, are a valuable resource for help and support in the early weeks of breastfeeding. Get help early on if things are not going well. Many moms are reluctant to get help or not sure where to find help with breastfeeding issues, but getting help early is so important! Many times minor issues can turn into major problems if help is not found early on. Getting qualified help is the key when facing challenges.

- ❖ **Remember to take care of yourself.** Often times moms are so exhausted they forget to eat or drink frequently. Having snacks that you can grab quickly are life savers. You will feel your best if you are also making sure you are resting often and getting plenty to eat and drink.