

COMMON QUESTIONS

SHOULD I SUPPLEMENT WITH FORMULA?

Giving your baby formula may cause him or her to not want as much breastmilk. This will decrease your milk supply. If you worry about your baby getting enough milk, talk to your baby's doctor.

DOES MY BABY NEED CEREAL OR WATER?

Your baby needs only breastmilk for the first 6 months of life. Breastmilk has all the nutrition your baby needs. Giving the baby cereal may cause your baby to not want as much breastmilk. This will decrease your milk supply. Even in hot climates, breastfed infants do not need water or juice. When your baby is ready for solid foods, the food should be rich in iron. However, cereal is not a good first food for your baby. Talk to your doctor about what is right for your baby.

IS IT OKAY FOR MY BABY TO USE A PACIFIER?

If you want to try it, it is best to wait until your baby is at least 3 or 4 weeks old to introduce a pacifier. This allows your baby time to learn how to latch well on the breast and get enough milk.

DOES MY BABY NEED MORE VITAMIN D?

Maybe. Vitamin D is needed to build strong bones. All infants and children should get at least 400 IU of vitamin D each day. To meet this need, your child's doctor may recommend that you give your baby a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU each day⁴. This should start in the first few days of life. You can buy vitamin D supplements for infants at a drugstore or grocery store.

Even though sunlight is a major source of vitamin D, it is hard to measure how much sunlight your baby gets. Sun exposure also can be harmful. Once your baby is weaned from breastmilk, talk to your baby's doctor about whether your baby still needs vitamin D supplements. Some children do not get enough vitamin D from the food they eat.

IS IT SAFE TO SMOKE, DRINK, OR USE DRUGS?

If you smoke, it is best for you and your baby to quit as soon as possible. If you can't quit, it is still better to breastfeed because it can help protect your baby from respiratory problems and SIDS. Be sure to smoke away from your baby and change your clothes to keep your baby away from the chemicals smoking leaves behind. Ask your doctor or nurse for help quitting smoking.

You should avoid alcohol in large amounts. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), an occasional drink is fine. The AAP recommends waiting two or more hours before nursing. You also can pump milk before you drink to feed your baby later.

It is not safe for you to use an illicit drug. Drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and PCP can harm your baby. Some reported side effects in babies include seizures, vomiting, poor feeding, and tremors.

CAN I TAKE MEDICINES IF I AM BREASTFEEDING?

You can take certain medicines while breastfeeding, but not all. Almost

all medicines pass into your milk in small amounts. Some have no effect on the baby and can be used while breastfeeding. Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medicines you are using and ask before you start using new medicines. This includes prescription and over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and dietary or herbal supplements. For some women with chronic health problems, stopping a medicine can be more dangerous than the effects it will have on the breastfed baby.

The National Library of Medicine offers an online tool to learn about the effects of medicines on breastfed babies. The website address is <https://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/newtoxnet/lactmed.htm>. You can print out the information you find here and take it to your doctor or pharmacist to discuss.

CAN I BREASTFEED IF I AM SICK?

Some women think that they should not breastfeed when they are sick. But most common illnesses, such as colds, seasonal flu, or diarrhea, can't be passed through breastmilk. In fact, your breastmilk has antibodies in it. These antibodies will help protect your baby from getting the same sickness. (See [page 5](#) to learn about antibodies.)

If you are sick with the flu, including the H1N1 flu (also called the swine flu), you should avoid being near your baby so that you do not infect him or her. Have someone who is not sick feed your baby your expressed breastmilk.

⁴American Academy of Pediatrics, Vitamin D Supplementation for Infants, 2010.

You also should not breastfeed if you:

- Have HIV or AIDS. If you have HIV and want to give your baby breastmilk, you can contact a human milk bank. (See [page 37](#) for more information.)
- Have untreated, active tuberculosis
- Are infected with human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I or type II
- Take prescribed cancer chemotherapy agents, such as antimetabolites
- Are undergoing radiation therapy; but, such nuclear medicine therapies require only a temporary break from breastfeeding

WILL MY PARTNER BE JEALOUS IF I BREASTFEED?

Maybe. You can help prevent jealousy by preparing your partner before birth. Explain that you need his or her support. Discuss the important and lasting health reasons to breastfeed. Remind your partner that the baby will need to be fed somehow. Any method will take time, but once breastfeeding is going smoothly, it is convenient and comfortable. Be sure to emphasize that not breastfeeding can cost you money. Your partner can help by changing and bathing the baby, sharing household chores, and simply sitting with you and the baby to enjoy the special mood that breastfeeding creates.

DO I HAVE TO RESTRICT MY SEX LIFE WHILE BREASTFEEDING?

No, but you may need to make some adjustments to make sex more comfortable for you and your partner if you have the following:

- Vaginal dryness. Some women experience vaginal dryness right after childbirth and during breastfeeding. This is because estrogen levels are lower during these times. If you have vaginal dryness, you can try more foreplay and water-based lubricants.
- Leaking breasts. You can feed your

baby or express some milk before lovemaking so your breasts will be more comfortable and less likely to leak. It is common for a woman's breasts to leak or even spray milk during sex, especially during her orgasm. If this happens, put pressure on your nipples or have a towel handy to catch the milk.

DO I STILL NEED BIRTH CONTROL IF I AM BREASTFEEDING?

Yes. Your doctor will likely discuss birth control with you before you give birth. Breastfeeding is not a sure way to prevent pregnancy, even though it can delay the return of normal ovulation and menstrual cycles. Discuss with your doctor birth control choices that you can use while breastfeeding.

I HEARD THAT BREASTMILK CAN HAVE TOXINS IN IT FROM THE ENVIRONMENT. IS IT STILL SAFE FOR MY BABY?

Although certain chemicals can appear in breastmilk, breastfeeding is still the best way to feed and nurture young infants and children. The known risks of not breastfeeding far outweigh any possible risks from environmental pollutants. Remember that your baby was once inside your body and was exposed to the same things you were exposed to during pregnancy.

The concern over environmental toxins is a reason to breastfeed, not avoid it. Infant formula, the water it is mixed with, or the bottles or nipples used to give it to the baby can be contaminated with bacteria or chemicals.

DOES MY BREASTFED BABY NEED VACCINES? IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO GET A VACCINE WHEN I'M BREASTFEEDING?

Yes. Vaccines are very important to your baby's health. Breastfeeding may also help your baby respond better to certain immunizations that protect your baby. Follow the schedule your doctor

gives you and, if you miss any vaccines, check with the doctor about getting your baby back on track as soon as possible. Breastfeeding while the vaccine is given to your baby, or immediately afterward, can help relieve pain and soothe an upset baby.

Nursing mothers may also receive most vaccines. Breastfeeding does not affect the vaccine, and most vaccines are not harmful to your breastmilk. However, vaccines for smallpox and yellow fever can be passed through breastmilk. Avoid these vaccinations if possible while breastfeeding and talk to your doctor.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY BABY BITES ME?

If your baby starts to clamp down, you can put your finger in your baby's mouth and take him off of your breast with a firm "No." Try not to yell as it may scare him. If your baby continues to bite you, you can:

- Gently press your baby to your breast. This will cause your baby to open her mouth more to breathe.
- Stop the feeding right away so your baby is not tempted to get another reaction from you. Don't laugh. This is part of your baby's learning of limits.
- Offer a cold teething toy or frozen wet washcloth before breastfeeding so your baby's gums are soothed already.
- Put your baby down for a moment to show that biting brings a negative consequence. You can then pick your baby up again to give comfort.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY BABY KEEPS CRYING?

If your baby does not seem comforted by breastfeeding or other soothing measures, talk to your baby's doctor. Your baby may be uncomfortable or in pain. You can also check to see if your baby is teething. The doctor and a lactation consultant can help you find ways to help your baby eat well.