

LEARNING TO BREASTFEED

Breastfeeding is a process that takes time and practice. Keep in mind that you make milk in response to your baby sucking at the breast. Luckily, your baby loves being close to you and sucking at your breasts. All that time spent breastfeeding in your baby's first few days prepares your body to make lots of milk, whether you go on to breastfeed for three weeks or three years.

The following steps can help you get off to a great start breastfeeding:

- Cuddle with your baby skin-to-skin right away after giving birth.
- Breastfeed as soon as possible after giving birth.
- Ask for an IBCLC to help you.
- Ask the hospital staff not to give your baby pacifiers, sugar water, or formula, unless it is medically necessary.
- Let your baby stay in your hospital room all day and night so that you can breastfeed often.
- Try to avoid giving your baby any pacifiers or artificial nipples until he or she is skilled at latching onto your breast (usually around 3 to 4 weeks old).

PREPARE FOR BREASTFEEDING BEFORE YOU GIVE BIRTH

To prepare for breastfeeding, the most important thing expectant moms can do is to have confidence in themselves. Committing to breastfeeding starts with the belief that you can do it!

Other steps you can take to prepare for breastfeeding are:

GET GOOD PRENATAL CARE, which can help you avoid early delivery. Babies born too early have more problems with breastfeeding.

TELL YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR PLANS TO BREASTFEED, and ask whether the place where you plan to deliver your baby has the staff and setup to support successful breastfeeding. Some hospitals and birth centers have taken special steps to create the best possible environment for

successful breastfeeding. These places are called Baby-Friendly Hospitals and Birth Centers.

TAKE A BREASTFEEDING CLASS. Pregnant women who learn how to breastfeed are more likely to be successful at breastfeeding than those who do not. Breastfeeding classes offer pregnant women and their partners the chance to prepare and ask questions before the baby's arrival.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR TO RECOMMEND A LACTATION CONSULTANT. You can establish a relationship with a lactation consultant before the baby comes so that you will have support ready after the baby is born.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR HEALTH. Discuss any breast surgery or injury you may

have had. If you have depression or are taking supplements or medicines, talk with your doctor about treatments that can work with breastfeeding.

TELL YOUR DOCTOR THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO BREASTFEED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER DELIVERY.

The sucking instinct is very strong within the baby's first hour of life.

TALK TO FRIENDS WHO HAVE BREASTFED, or consider joining a breastfeeding support group.

GET THE ITEMS YOU WILL NEED FOR BREASTFEEDING, such as nursing bras, covers, and nursing pillows. You may want to pack these in your bag to have at the hospital when you deliver your baby.