

HOW LONG SHOULD I BREASTFEED?

Many leading health organizations recommend that most infants breastfeed for at least 12 months, with exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. This means that babies are not given any foods or liquids other than breastmilk for the first six months.

These recommendations are supported by organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Nurse-Midwives, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and American Public Health Association.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH YOUR MILK, YOUR BABY, AND YOU IN THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

TIME	MILK	BABY	YOU (MOM)
BIRTH	Your body makes colostrum (a rich, thick, yellowish milk) in small amounts. It gives your baby early protection against diseases.	Your baby will probably be awake in the first hour after birth. This is a good time to breastfeed your baby.	You will be tired and excited.
FIRST 12–24 HOURS	Your baby will drink about 1 teaspoon of colostrum at each feeding. You may not see the colostrum, but it has what your baby needs and in the right amount.	It is normal for the baby to sleep heavily. Labor and delivery are hard work! Some babies like to nuzzle and may be too sleepy to latch at first. Feedings may be short and disorganized. Take advantage of your baby's strong instinct to suck and feed upon waking every couple of hours.	You will be tired, too. Be sure to rest.
NEXT 3–5 DAYS	Your mature (white) milk takes the place of colostrum. It is normal for mature milk to have a yellow or golden tint at first.	Your baby will feed a lot, most likely 8 to 12 times or more in 24 hours. Very young breastfed babies do not eat on a schedule. It is okay if your baby eats every 2 to 3 hours for several hours, then sleeps for 3 to 4 hours. Feedings may take about 15 to 20 minutes on each breast. The baby's sucking rhythm will be slow and long. The baby might make gulping sounds.	Your breasts may feel full and leak. (You can use disposable or cloth pads in your bra to help with leaking.)
FIRST 4–6 WEEKS	White breastmilk continues.	Your baby will now likely be better at breastfeeding and have a larger stomach to hold more milk. Feedings may take less time and may be further apart.	Your body gets used to breastfeeding. Your breasts may become softer and the leaking may slow down.