

# The First Ten Days of Nursing



What made you decide to nurse your baby? Perhaps you did for the “health of it!” You also want to bond with your baby. Nursing is a special time that only you can share with your baby. Keep in mind how rewarding it is. It will help you through the challenges you will face as you and baby learn how to nurse. Below are some tips to help you through the first ten days.

## DAY 1

Some babies nurse well at the breast right from birth. Others don't. If your baby doesn't, ask for help at the hospital. Someone can teach you how to express your milk and then offer it by cup or spoon. That way, you can still feed your baby until he learns to nurse. Be patient. It won't take long.

### **Request “no bottles please.”**

Giving bottles makes nursing more difficult. Babies learn a different way of eating right from the start and may not nurse well at the breast. Wait 3- 4 weeks before introducing a bottle. Pacifiers may also be a problem if your baby is not nursing well or has a weak suck. Wait a few weeks before using one.

### **Nurse your baby within the first hour or two after birth, if possible.**

The sooner your baby nurses, the quicker he learns to nurse well. Feed your baby after delivery when he is most alert. Epidurals and pain medication can make babies sleepy and less willing to nurse.

### **Feed your baby at least 6 times during the first 24 hours after birth.**

After birth, your baby may sleep for a while. This is normal. Both you and baby need it! After this sleep period, start nursing about every 2 - 3 hours. Wake him to nurse if he goes longer than 3 hours between feeds.

### **Nurse your baby when he first begins to wake up. Don't wait for him to start crying.**

A crying baby may have a harder time latching onto the breast than a calm baby. Keep your baby in the room with you so you can respond to these early waking signs:

- ♥ Baby opens mouth wide.
- ♥ Baby's eyelids move rapidly.
- ♥ Baby wiggles and makes little sounds.
- ♥ Baby puts hand into mouth.

## DAY 2-3

### **How often should I nurse?**

Nurse your baby 8-12 times each 24 hours. Respond to his early feeding cues. Wake your baby to nurse if he waits more than 3 hours during the day or 5 hours at night to eat.

### **How can I tell my baby is getting enough to eat?**

Keep track of the dirty diapers. Your baby should dirty 2-3 diapers each day. They will look tarry-black at first and then turn brownish-black and then brownish-green/yellow. The gradual color change is a good sign that your baby is getting enough. Passing these dark stools will also help your baby avoid getting jaundice.

### **Is it normal to feel some discomfort when nursing?**

You may feel something like period cramps while nursing. This is normal. Nursing helps to shrink your uterus and flatten your stomach. It should pass in a few days. Your nipples may also be tender. This also should pass in a few days. There might be a slight tug, but the discomfort should not be severe. If it is, ask for help to make nursing comfortable.

### **What should my milk look like?**

Your first milk, called colostrum, is produced in small amounts. It may look thick and yellowish. This is normal. It is your baby's first immunization and helps protect against infections. Colostrum is so rich and healthy that small amounts is all your baby needs. Your baby does not need formula after a feeding.

## DAY 4-7

### **My breasts feel full and tender. What should I do?**

Your breasts will become fuller and firmer as your milk changes from colostrum to mature milk. This should happen between the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> day. Your baby may have a hard time latching on. Apply a warm compress to your breasts and then hand express a little milk to soften them. Latch the baby on after you relieve the fullness.

### **What should the milk look like?**

Your mature milk will not look like formula or colostrum. It is more watery. This is normal. The look of your milk will change to meet your baby's needs.

### **How often should I nurse the baby?**

Nurse 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. He may feed every 1½ to 3 hours around the clock, or more often during the day with a longer stretch at night. Wake your baby to feed if he waits more than 3 hours during the day or more than 5 hours at night to feed. Watch for the early hunger cues.

### **How can I tell the baby is getting enough to eat?**

What goes in must come out! Keep track of the dirty diapers. By now your baby should dirty 4-10 diapers each 24 hours. The diapers should look golden-yellow, soft and seedy. If your baby has less than 2-4 dirty diapers or the color has not changed to yellowish, call for help. As your baby gets older, he will dirty less diapers.

### **How can I get some rest?**

Ask for help! Caring for the baby is what you should be doing. Let others take care of the house and other children. Sleep with the baby's crib right next to you. While nursing or cuddling in bed, you may fall asleep whether you intend to or not. Here are some safety guidelines when feeding or holding babies in bed. It will reduce the risk of entrapment or overlay. These guidelines should be taken with *all* babies whether mom is nursing or using formula.

- ♥ Make sure you have a firm mattress, not a soft mattress or water bed.
- ♥ Avoid placing your baby on a comforter or pillow. (Babies should not be fed on any soft surface, such as a couch or fluffy chair if there is a chance of falling asleep together.)
- ♥ Make sure the bedding is tight fitting.
- ♥ Remove any soft objects like loose pillows, blankets or comforters near the baby's face.
- ♥ There should not be any space between the bed and wall where the baby could become trapped.
- ♥ Never wear clothes with drawstrings or ribbons that could become tangled around the baby.
- ♥ Place the baby on his/her back, not his stomach.
- ♥ Avoid over bundling the baby. The baby should not feel hot to the touch.
- ♥ Do not nurse or cuddle in bed while smoking or taking any medications that make you drowsy.
- ♥ Do not place the baby in bed with other children or pets.

## DAY 7-10

### **My breasts feel less full than before? Am I losing my milk?**

Your breasts may begin to feel less full and firm. They become softer because the swelling goes away. This is normal. You still have enough milk. You know your baby is getting enough if he continues to dirty at least 2-4 yellowish diapers each day. At about 2-3 months, he may dirty less diapers.

### **Why does my baby want to eat so often?**

Babies go through growth spurts at about 10 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks and 3 months. During this time, your baby may become more fussy and want to nurse more often. This is normal. Growth spurts usually last 1 or 2 days.

### **What can I do to get some more rest?**

Keep asking for help! You need help now more than ever. Rest when the baby does.

