

# Breastfeeding

Take 5 tips

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Pam White  
Health Net

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## Benefits to baby

Breastfeeding is the best source of food for babies during the first year of life. It contains the right nutrients in the right amounts. Colostrum is rich in protein and helps the baby's digestive system grow and function. Some of the nutrients in breast milk have been shown to lower the risk of asthma, allergies, colic, help protect against other childhood illnesses and infections, and has been found to protect against obesity. Researchers have identified several possible reasons for breastfeeding's protective effects against obesity:

- Breastfed babies may be better able to eat only as much as they need. Mothers can't see how much milk the baby is drinking, so they must rely on the baby's behavior, not an empty bottle to signal that they are full.<sup>1</sup>



- Breastfed babies are more likely than formula-fed babies to try and accept new foods. Acceptance of new foods is important because a healthy diet should include a wide variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables.<sup>2</sup> Because breast milk contains flavors from foods eaten by the mother, breastfed infants are exposed to a variety of tastes very early in life. In contrast, infant formula always tastes the same.
- Breastfeeding has different effects than formula-feeding on a baby's metabolism and on hormones such as insulin, which tells the body to store fat. The protein and

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fat in breast milk is better used by a baby's body than the protein and fat in formula; therefore, formula-fed babies tend to be fatter than breastfed babies at 12 months of age.<sup>1</sup>

### *Benefits to mom*

- Eye to eye contact and skin to skin touching encourages emotional bonding and allows time for you to quietly relax and grow closer to your baby.
- Breastfeeding releases oxytocin which helps the uterus to contract and return to normal size, and reduces bleeding after delivery.
- You burn calories to help you lose pregnancy pounds.
- Lowers your risk of osteoporosis, diabetes and some forms of breast and ovarian cancers.

### *Breastfeeding positions*

**Cradle hold** – Hold baby with his head on your forearm and entire body facing you. Use your other arm to support head, neck and lower back. This is the most commonly used and comfortable position for most moms.

**Cross-cradle or transitional hold** – Hold baby along the opposite arm from the breast you are using. Support baby's head with the palm of your hands at the base of the head. This is a good position for premature babies and babies who are having problems latching on.

**Clutch or football hold** – Hold baby on your side, lying on his back, with his head at the level of your nipple. Support baby's head with the palm of your hand at the base of his head. This position is good for mom's with large breasts or inverted nipples, and because it protects your belly from the pressure or weight of the baby, it can be very comfortable if you've had a cesarean delivery.

**Side-lying position** – Lie in bed on your side while the baby faces you. Your baby will rest on the mattress or in the bend of your elbow.

Pull baby close and guide baby's mouth to your nipple. This position allows you to sleep while baby nurses and is good for moms who have had a cesarean birth.

### *Breastfeeding problems*

Your breasts may become engorged. This happens when fluid gets trapped in your breast. They start to feel hard and swollen and may hurt. These symptoms can be relieved by placing an ice pack on the breast, taking cold showers and expressing milk by hand or by pumping.

You may also experience sore nipples. Babies tend to suck more actively at the beginning and may not latch on correctly. To prevent sore nipples, make sure baby is latching on correctly and let your nipples air dry in between feedings.

Another situation you may experience is a blocked duct. This happens when your milk ducts get plugged. You'll notice a single sore spot on your breast that may be hot and red. A blocked duct can be relieved by placing a hot pack and massaging the breast.

Sore nipples can sometimes lead to cracked nipples which allow bacteria to enter the breast and cause an infection or mastitis. Antibiotics are usually used to treat the infection. But don't worry, you can still continue to breastfeed while you have the infection and are taking antibiotics.

### *Breastfeeding at work and on the go*

Returning to work after having your baby can be challenging. To encourage women to continue breastfeeding, most states have passed legislation requiring employers to provide a reasonable place besides a bathroom stall and reasonable break time to express breast milk. You can enhance a dull space by bringing in framed photos of your baby, magazines and maybe a radio for soothing music while you're expressing your milk.

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**Choosing a pump** – You have many options when it comes to pumps. Pricing may be a factor as well as how effective a particular pump may be. Pricing varies depending on whether it is a manual or electric pump. You can purchase pumps from baby supply stores, department stores, a lactation specialist, breastfeeding organizations or you may choose to rent one.

- If you will be using a used breast pump, keep in mind that used breast pumps should have new tubings and filters (or you should be able to purchase replacement parts).

After expressing breast milk, try to refrigerate as soon as possible or place in a cool environment. Your milk will keep for up to 12 hours or more in a cool environment. As the temperature rises, the amount of time your breast milk will stay fresh decreases. Refrigerated, it can keep for several days. *You can also freeze breast milk up to three months, being mindful to defrost the frozen milk in warm water rather than the microwave.*

If you've chosen to stay at home with your baby, there may be days when you will need to visit with friends or family and run errands. You can take baby with you and continue to breastfeed when baby is hungry. There is also legislation in place recognizing the rights of mothers to breastfeed their child in any public or private location. If you are concerned or apprehensive about breastfeeding in public, wear clothing that will allow you to breastfeed discreetly, or use a baby sling, nursing cover or blanket to cover yourself and the baby.

And patronize facilities with the “Breastfeeding Welcome Here” logo.

If you're still uncomfortable about breastfeeding in public, here are more tips you can follow:

- If you're taking a short trip, breastfeed just before leaving and immediately after you return.
- Sit in your car while you feed your baby or go to a women's changing room in a clothing store.

*For breastfeeding support, contact:*

[www.breastfeedforall.org](http://www.breastfeedforall.org)

La Leche League International – [www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org)

National Breastfeeding Helpline

Women's Health

1-800-994-9662

WebMD – [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

Breastfeeding Task Force of

Greater Los Angeles –

[www.breastfeedla.org](http://www.breastfeedla.org)

International Lactation

Consultant Association –

[www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org)

Women, Infants

and Children

Program (WIC) –

[www.cdph.ca.gov/](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/)

[programs/wicworks/pages](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/pages)

March of Dimes (MOD) –

[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) –

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine –

[www.bfmed.org](http://www.bfmed.org)

American Public Health Association (APHA) –

[www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) –

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



<sup>1</sup>Dewey KG, Is breastfeeding protective against childhood obesity? J Hum Lact. 2003; 19:9-18

<sup>2</sup>Mennella JA, Mother's Milk: A medium for early flavor experiences. J Hum Lact. 1995; 11:39-45