SpeakUP™

What you need to know about breastfeeding

What you need to know about breastfeeding is supported by

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine
www.bfmed.org
American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
www.awhonn.org
Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.
www.babyfriendlyusa.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding
March of Dimes
www.marchofdimes.com
United States Breastfeeding Committee
www.usbreastfeeding.org

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.

Helping health care organizations help patients

As a mother, one of the most important things you will decide is how to feed your baby. The many health benefits of breastfeeding include:

- Natural source of the nutrients your baby needs
- Less risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Fewer ear and respiratory infections for your baby
- Enhances newborn brain development
- Less risk your baby will be overweight
- Less risk of diabetes for your baby and you
- Less risk of postpartum depression for you
- Less risk of breast and ovarian cancer for you
- Faster recovery for you

Breastfeeding is natural for you and your baby, but it is a skill that needs to be learned. Speak up and ask questions about breastfeeding before your baby is born and while you are in the hospital. This will help you continue to breastfeed after you go home. This brochure provides information to help you breastfeed your baby. Remember, you should always talk to your doctor or nurse about any tips or advice given to you about your health.

The Joint Commission

Before you go to the hospital

- Learn about breastfeeding. Go online, read books, take a class and talk with other moms who have reached their breastfeeding goals.
- Get the support of your partner. Go to breastfeeding classes and read the materials together.
- Gather a support team. Ask friends or relatives who have breastfed if you can call them whenever you need help or support.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about breastfeeding. Ask what happens at the hospital after the baby is born. Tell your doctor or nurse you want to breastfeed within the first hour, unless medically not possible.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about birthing choices and how they affect breastfeeding.
- If you have a written birth plan, include that you want to breastfeed.
- Ask about breastfeeding support at the hospital where you will have your baby. Find out if it follows the 10 steps of the Baby-Friendly Hospital program.
- Ask if the hospital has a lactation consultant. They are trained to provide additional help if you have problems breastfeeding. Ask how you can contact the lactation consultant.
- You may want to ask some friends and family to visit after you go home. This may help you feel more comfortable as you and your baby learn to breastfeed.
- Visit your new baby's doctor or nurse. Ask how they can help you and your baby get started breastfeeding. Ask if they work with a lactation consultant.

In the hospital

It is important to speak up about your desire to breastfeed. When you go to the hospital, tell your nurses and doctors that you want to breastfeed as soon as possible after your baby is born. The following steps can promote bonding with your baby and lay a good foundation for breastfeeding:

- Ask that your baby be placed skin-to-skin on you as soon as your baby is born. Stay skin-to-skin until after the first breastfeeding. Skin-to-skin contact can help keep your baby's temperature and breathing normal. It can also increase your milk supply.
- If you are cold, ask for a blanket to cover you and your baby. Your body heat will keep your baby warm as long as your baby's back is covered. Your baby does not need to be tightly wrapped.
- Tell caregivers you want to breastfeed before your baby's tests are done. Many tests can be done while your baby is skin-to-skin on you. Ask to go along if your baby is taken away for a test.
- If you have a Cesarean birth, you can still have skin-to-skin contact and breastfeed. You should be able to do this within the first two hours unless there is a medical reason not to.
- You can usually breastfeed if you have more than one baby. Your body will make enough milk to feed all your babies.
- Have your baby stay in your room. "Rooming in" encourages skin-to-skin contact and helps you recognize early feeding cues such as when your baby starts sucking his or her fist.
- Speak up and tell staff that you do not want your baby given formula or water, unless there is a medical reason for it.
- Ask staff not to give your baby a pacifier or bottle. These should not be given until your baby is about four weeks old, after breastfeeding is well established.

It is important to know how to get the breastfeeding support you need in the hospital. You also need to know how you and your baby can stay healthy. These tips can help.

- Ask your nurse to help you breastfeed. The nurse should watch you breastfeed several times before you leave the hospital. The nurse can tell if your baby is latching on and getting milk.
- If you have trouble breastfeeding, ask your nurse for help. Ask to talk to a lactation consultant if you continue to have trouble.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse or lactation consultant about what you should eat or drink while you are breastfeeding.
- Wash your hands often, especially before touching your baby. Watch to see that caregivers wash their hands. Do not be afraid to speak up if they do not. Ask visitors to wash their hands.
- Breast milk is very important if your baby is born early or is sick. Breast milk can help your baby get better faster and develop properly. The nurses or lactation consultant can help you learn how to pump your milk if your baby cannot breastfeed.
- If your baby has to stay in the hospital, stay with your baby, if possible. If you cannot stay, visit often. Ask the doctor or nurse if you can hold your baby skin-to-skin. This may be possible, even in a special care unit.
- When you leave, ask if you can call the hospital when you have questions about breastfeeding. Also ask for contacts at a breastfeeding support group in your area.
- Breastfeeding may be uncomfortable at first, but it should not hurt. If it does, ask for help.
- If anyone tells you to stop breastfeeding, ask why and get a second opinion.

After you leave the hospital

No matter how you feed your baby, life with a newborn can be challenging. For the first few weeks, most babies do not eat and sleep on a regular schedule. The following tips can help you continue breastfeeding when you return home.

- You and your baby need to recover. Plan to spend a lot of time resting, holding your baby skin-to-skin and breastfeeding. During the early weeks, your baby should not go more than three or four hours between feedings.
- Plan to see your baby's doctor or nurse within 48 hours of coming home from the hospital, or within 24 hours if your baby has a health problem. The doctor or nurse will make sure that your baby is healthy and getting enough to eat.
- Keep your baby within hearing range. This will help you respond quickly to your baby's early feeding cues.
- If you get sick, keep breastfeeding. Be sure to tell your doctor or nurse that you are breastfeeding. You can safely breastfeed even while you are taking most medicines.
- Ask about the resources that are available to help you continue breastfeeding after you leave the hospital.
- If you have questions, call an expert. Do not feel embarrassed if you need to ask for help. Even if you have breastfed before, every baby is different. There are people who want to help you breastfeed.

For more information

Your Guide to Breastfeeding from the National Women's Health Information Center.

Baby Friendly USA lists 10 steps that hospitals can take to support breastfeeding.

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program offers breastfeeding advice.

LactMed provides information about medicines and breastfeeding for health professionals.

The goal of the Speak Up™ program is to help patients and their advocates become more informed and involved in their health care.