

Breastfeeding Q&A

Question: What are the health benefits of breastfeeding?

Answer: Breastfeeding provides increased health benefits for babies and their mothers. The health benefits of breast milk are due to the species-specific live cells, antibodies and hormones that are present in human milk but lacking in formula.

Full term infants are less likely to develop:

- Colds, pneumonia & asthma
- Ear infections
- Diarrhea
- Skin conditions like eczema
- Type 1 and 2 diabetes
- Leukemia
- Obesity
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Mothers are less likely to develop:

- Breast or ovarian cancer
- Type 2 diabetes
- Postpartum depression

Question: How do I know if breastfeeding will work for me?

Answer: Learn about breastfeeding by spending time with other mothers who breastfeed. Go to a local breastfeeding support group before your baby is born. This is a great way to learn about breastfeeding and meet other breastfeeding mothers. Contact your local hospital to find out what is available in your area. You can also attend a breastfeeding class and read a book about breastfeeding to get you prepared.

Question: Can I breastfeed if my baby is born preterm?

Answer: Yes. It depends on how early your baby is born whether your baby will be able to breastfeed right away or not.



Before and after birth, many mothers are curious about breastfeeding. Here are answers to some common questions.

If your baby is born very early, you may need to use a breast pump to build up and keep a full milk supply until your baby can exclusively breastfeed. More information can be found in the Breastfeeding the Preterm Baby Q&A.

Question: Does breastfeeding hurt?

Answer: No, it shouldn't hurt. At first, it can feel a little uncomfortable in the first minute or so after your baby latches. After, you should feel a tugging feeling when your baby sucks. If you feel pain throughout the breastfeeding session, get help from a lactation consultant to learn how to latch your baby on right.

Question: How often will I need to breastfeed my baby?

Answer: The first several weeks, your baby will breastfeed 8-12x every 24 hours. Feed your baby when she is hungry, she will give you signs called hunger cues. Over time, she will breastfeed less often. More information can be found in the Making Milk For Your Baby Q&A.

Question: Does the size of my breasts make a difference in the amount of milk I can make?

Answer: No. Breast size is determined by the amount of fatty tissue they contain. Your breast size does not affect your ability to make milk. Both small and large breasted women can make enough milk for their baby's needs.

Question: How will I know how much milk my baby is getting if I breastfeed?

Answer: Easy. What goes in must come out! You will know how much your baby is getting by how often he has wet and dirty diapers. Healthy weight gain is also a good sign that your baby is getting what he needs. You don't need to know exactly how much your baby takes. You only need to know that your baby is thriving. This can simplify life with a newborn.

Question: I am going back to work. Should I even start breastfeeding?

Answer: Yes. Some breastfeeding is always better than none. When you go back to work you have many choices:

- Full breastfeeding: Going to your baby or having your baby brought to you to breastfeed
- Pumping and breastfeeding: Giving pumped milk to your baby when you are apart and breastfeeding when you are together
- Pumping, giving formula and breastfeeding

Formula and breastfeeding

Question: What if my baby wants to breastfeed in public? That makes me uncomfortable.

References

Mohrbacher N. Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple: A Guide for Helping Mothers. Amarillo, TX: Hale Publishing, LP; 2010.
Spangler A. Breastfeeding: A Parent's Guide. 9th ed. Cincinnati, OH: Specialty Lithographing Co; 2010.



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Answer: You don't have to if you don't want to. Many places have private nursing lounges. You may even find that with a little practice and a blanket to cover up, you can breastfeed anywhere without anyone noticing.

Question: Do I need to watch what I eat and drink if I am breastfeeding?

Answer: There aren't any foods that you must avoid. The key is to eat a variety of healthy foods and not eat too much of one thing.

Drink to thirst. Healthy beverages without caffeine are better, like water, non-fat milk or 100% juice. One or two caffeinated drinks a day are not likely to cause your baby to be fussy or wakeful. It is better not to drink alcohol. A small glass of beer or wine for a special occasion is usually not a problem.

Question: If I breastfeed, will my partner feel left out?

Answer: Your partner is the key to your breastfeeding success. The first weeks after having a baby can be both exciting and overwhelming - you are learning a lot and so is your partner. Your partner can help in many ways: learning to recognize your baby's hunger cues, helping you get comfortable to breastfeed, helping you stay hydrated and nourished, helping after breastfeeding to get your baby comfortable, and praising your efforts. Work together - this is just the beginning of your days as a family.

This is general information and does not replace the advice of your healthcare provider. If you have a problem you cannot solve quickly, seek help right away.

Every baby is different, if in doubt, contact your physician or other healthcare provider.