



## Health Fact Sheet-Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is perhaps the single most important gift a mother can give her infant. Breast milk contains all the nutrients necessary for an infant's growth, provides antibodies to help fight illness and aids the bonding between mother and child. While breastfeeding is natural, it is also a learning process. Healthcare providers can assist new mothers after the birth of the baby, teaching them various positions and providing support. It often takes several weeks for a new mother to feel comfortable and confident while nursing her infant.

New mothers -and dads-are often concerned about the amount of milk a baby is receiving. Colostrum, or early breast milk, is thick and creamy yellow. By the third or fourth day after birth, the breast milk becomes thin and bluish white in color. Newborns commonly nurse every two hours since breast milk is easily digestible. Infants up to two months need two to five oz per feeding, which increases to five to seven oz at six months. In a 24- hours period, the average 10 lb baby needs 26.7 oz. Regular visits to the pediatrician will ensure that the child is healthy and growing.

### **Breastfeeding and Nutrition**

Just as the baby is receiving the best possible nutrition from breast milk, a woman must also eat a well balanced diet while nursing. Most women require 2000 to 2200 calories per day, eating fruits and vegetables and getting enough calcium. Alcohol and caffeine should be avoided and food additives should be kept to a minimum. Discuss medications, including over-the-counter medications, with your doctor.

Nursing moms are encouraged to drink adequate amounts of water, usually 8 to 10 glasses a day and whenever thirsty. While drinking more fluids does not increase the milk supply, it is necessary for a woman's body.

### **Returning to Work**

Each woman's decision on if and how to continue breastfeeding, while working, is very personal. But while breastfeeding poses challenges to working mothers, it need not be totally eliminated. Pumping during work breaks allows the mother to provide breast milk to the caregiver. Discuss with your employer the need for a quiet, private place to pump during your breaks. Milk can be stored in a refrigerator for up to 8 days and frozen for three to four months. Breast milk should not be refrozen. Be sure to discuss with your child care provider how handle breast milk.

After expressing, the breast milk should be stored in a clean container and labeled with the date the milk was pumped. Milk should be stored in the appropriate quantities that the baby is likely to need for one feeding. Breast milk can be refrigerated for up to eight days and frozen in a refrigerator freezer for one month or six months in a deep freezer. Once the breast milk is given to the caregiver, it should be labeled with the infants' name and date. Refrigerated or frozen milk should be thawed and warmed to body temperature by placing it under the faucet in a sink and running warm water over the container. Breast milk should not be microwaved, heated on a stove or allow to thaw overnight. Women have also combined breastfeeding with formula, preferring to nurse in the morning and in the evening and night while the caregiver uses formula.

### **Tips**

- Introduce a bottle to your baby at four to six weeks of age. Look for a nipple that is shaped similar to a human nipple, one with a wider base. You may need to try many different nipples to find one your child will accept.
- The baby may be more willing to take a bottle from someone other than the mother.
- Consult with your pediatrician or other healthcare provider if you have concerns.

### Additional Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics

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

La Leche League International

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

International Lactation Consultant Association

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