



Women's Health

Breastfeeding: What to expect

The first milk is colostrum

- Colostrum is concentrated milk that your breasts produce in pregnancy and the first few days after you give birth.
- Colostrum protects your baby against disease.

Baby's stomachs are very small

- Baby's stomachs are very small at birth and grow a little bigger each day.
- The amount of colostrum is small in the first few days so your baby's stomach will not get too full.
- Your breastmilk will increase each day, matching your baby's stomach size.
- Small, frequent feedings are best for babies, whether breastfed or bottle fed.

Your baby's stomach size

- Day 1 – Small marble
- Day 3 – Sweet cherry
- Day 10 – Ping-pong ball

Feeding cues

- Feeding cues are signs that your baby is ready to eat.
- Examples of feeding cues include stirring, body movement, mouth opening, turning head to side, stretching, hand moving to mouth, sucking movements.
- **Crying is a late feeding cue.** It is harder to feed your baby if you wait for crying.

What is “feeding on cue”?

- Watch your baby and start to breastfeed when you see feeding cues.
- Don't expect your newborn baby to feed on a schedule.
- You should feed your baby at least eight to 12 times in 24 hours for the first few weeks. Babies feed in clusters and may not evenly space out feedings over 24 hours.

Advantages of feeding on cue

Getting started with breastfeeding will be easier.

- Feeding your baby as often and as long as your baby wants will help you make as much milk as your baby needs.
- You bring comfort and provide pain relief to your baby when you feed on cue. Nursing is for comfort as well as nutrition!
- Your baby will gain weight better.
- Your breasts will be more comfortable (less engorgement).

Let your baby nurse as long as he or she wants, and finish the first side first

- At the beginning of the feeding your baby gets the watery protein portion of the milk, called foremilk. Toward the end of the feeding your baby gets the fat part of the milk, called hindmilk. This fat helps your baby feel full, gain weight and sleep better.

Avoid pacifiers and bottles until your baby is used to breastfeeding

- Sucking a pacifier or bottle is different than sucking at the breast. Once your baby has sucked on a bottle or pacifier, he or she may not want to latch at the breast when first learning to feed, because it is easier to eat from a bottle.
- When a baby sucks a pacifier or bottle, the breast does not get stimulation to make milk.



This handout does not take the place of a discussion with your provider. Discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your provider.