

Breastfeeding Tips For Success

by Linda Brooks RN IBCLC

Those are my tips for getting breastfeeding off to a good start. I hope they help ease you and your baby into a wonderful, rewarding breastfeeding experience. I'd love to hear any pointers you have too.

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Good luck, and enjoy your new baby!

What to do before baby arrives (load up on information)

by Linda Brooks RN IBCLC

Do your homework

Learn about breastfeeding before you have the baby! It's too hard after your baby is born when you are exhausted. So, sign up (and take your partner with you) to a really good prenatal breastfeeding class ... plus, join a breastfeeding support group and stick with it. Both are proven effective in helping moms get off to a good start.

Find out what really inspires you about breastfeeding. For some women it can be the huge health benefits such as a lower risk of breast cancer for mom and baby. For others, it is fewer dishes to wash, less doctor visits, and poop that doesn't stink so much. *Knowing what motivates you* will keep you going if it gets a little challenging in the first week or so when it could be so much easier to just give up.

Learn about hand expression and pumping. You might need to do this if supplementation of colostrum is needed. Watch the video at <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html>.

Build your support network

First, start by finding a good **board certified lactation consultant** that you know you can call if things are difficult! 95% of all problems can be avoided if every mom simply checked in with a good breastfeeding consultant during the first few days. Take her phone number with you to the hospital and call her if needed. Do not count on the staff at hospital to give the help you need in breastfeeding. The staff can be too busy, and different nurses on duty can give conflicting and confusing advice.

Second, get your partner involved! Support or lack of it, from a partner/spouse is the number one reason a mom will start and continue to breastfeed. Your partner must "buy into" the importance of breastfeeding and must know what to expect and how to support you. Only then will you get their loving support from the beginning, and especially during the learning curve of the first 4-6 weeks.

Third (repeat), join a breastfeeding support group. Moms who attend a weekly breastfeeding support group breastfeed longer with fewer problems. Join and start going before your baby is born. There, you will meet mothers who will encourage and support you.

Make a Breastfeeding Plan

Write a plan. Before the birth, review it with your doctor, midwife, doula, and pediatrician to make sure that there are no issues. Your plan is something that you and your health care providers agree to work on together rather than a document with which to confront them. Talk to your lactation consultant and your support group, they will help you. Your plan will outline the practices that you want to be followed to give the best possible outcome for breastfeeding. It may cover things such as: suctioning, skin-to-skin, pumping, pacifier use/non-use, supplemental feeding, bottles, formula, and so on.

What to do in the hospital when baby arrives

by Linda Brooks RN IBCLC

Spend the first hour (or longer) skin-to skin with your baby

Your baby should wear only a diaper and be right against mom's bare skin. This is the most remarkable thing you will ever witness. When placed skin-to-skin, babies instinctively gravitate towards the breast and begin to nurse spontaneously. This is natural and the way it should be. Getting your baby on the breast early also helps to stabilize his/her temperature and blood sugar; common reasons health-care providers may want to offer supplemental formula. Do it early and do it often.

Breastfeed your baby within the first hour

Your baby's instinct to breastfeed peaks about 20 to 30 minutes after birth – if not drowsy from drugs or anesthesia given to mom during labor and delivery. This is the time when your baby is most receptive to learning to breastfeed. It's not good for baby to be separated from you at all during this critical time. Your baby will not take much, perhaps less than a thimble full, but it is colostrum; very rich in nutrients, and has a mild but important laxative effect for baby, and it is nature's natural vaccine. Nature knows best; when first born your baby's tummy is tiny and it is all he/she needs. Supplements are not required.

Delay your baby's first bath and your shower until after you breastfeed.

Your baby uses the sense of smell to identify you and to find your breasts. Don't wash it off! Avoid scented soap and lotions from your neck to your belly button until breastfeeding is well established.

Keep your baby with you as much as possible

Keeping baby near you at all times will help you to be aware of early hunger cues (rooting, fussing, etc.) so that you can feed right away without allowing a work up into a hungry, stressful cry.

Limit visitors and interruptions

This is so hard to do with a new baby! But, your baby comes first. You will find it very difficult to make breastfeeding and extra skin-to-skin time a priority when your room is full of visitors. Sleep while your baby is sleeping. Put a sign on the door to check with the nurse before entering.

Nurse frequently in the early days

This could be as much as every hour, but make sure you are breastfeeding a minimum of 8-12 times in 24 hours. Frequent feedings are normal.

Get a professional to check up on your breastfeeding early

What to do when you take baby home

by Linda Brooks RN IBCLC

Nurse frequently in the early days

You should nurse as much as baby wants to feed. Frequent feedings are normal. Make sure you breastfeed 8-12 times or more every day. Several short feedings spread throughout the day have a much greater impact on your milk production ability than fewer 40 plus minute feedings. Also, remember that the first month is a learning time when your new baby will perfect his/her nursing skills. At the end of the month, it will take far less time to consume the same amount of milk.

Remove as much milk as possible in the first two weeks

Many moms don't realize that nature calibrates the breasts for overall milk-making capacity according to how much milk they make in the first two to three weeks. So, one thing you can do to maximize your breastfeeding experience is to remove as much milk as possible from your breasts during that time. This ensures you have the best milk production capability. Clearly, the best way to do this is through breastfeeding, but hand expressing and pumping (with a hospital grade pump) will also be helpful if breastfeeding is not going well.

Don't Skip Nighttime Breastfeeding

You're tired, you'd like to sleep, and it's so tempting to let hubby (or someone else) feed baby from a bottle ... even if it is pre-pumped breastmilk. But, what you need to know is 1) the major milk producing hormone prolactin responds best to baby's suckling and is highest at nighttime, and 2) milk flows more easily because mother is relaxed. These two important factors are critical to establishing the best milk supply.

Breastfeeding shouldn't hurt

When your baby is nursing well it shouldn't hurt or definitely should not result in nipple damage. Pain is a sign that something isn't working right. Most of the time pain is due to incorrect latch-on and/or positioning of the baby, which your lactation consultant can always fix. But, it could be a baby problem (something in the baby's mouth), a mama problem (something with mom's breasts), or something else that can be worked on. Also, it is not normal to have prolonged engorgement which can also hurt. Never suffer through a suspected problem or let it go. Your lactation consultant can help.

Get professional help early for any complications.

Always get help from your lactation consultant right when you suspect a breastfeeding problem. Early identification makes sure those problems are easier to manage and correct.

Avoid a pacifier or a bottle in the first month

Breastfeeding satisfies baby's very natural need to suck. A pacifier can actually reduce the time a baby will spend at the breast and therefore amount of milk he/she will consume. Also, it takes very different skills for a baby to breastfeed than to drink from a bottle and many babies cannot switch back and forth. So, it is usually better not to introduce pacifiers or bottles until well after a month of breastfeeding.

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End all your sentences in these two words ... “for now”

At the beginning, it seems that you spend all of your time nursing. But, it does not stay that way. You and your baby will establish a feeding pattern, feedings get more efficient, and the time between feedings stretches making life more predictable and manageable.