Breastfeeding Your Baby

BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

For the baby

- The first milk (*colostrum*) helps the baby's digestive system function better.
- There are antibodies from the mother in the milk that help the baby fight off infections.
- The baby has a lower incidence of asthma, allergies and SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- The nutrients in breast milk are better than formulas for the baby and helps the baby's brain grow better.
- Babies who breastfeed have less gas, colic and constipation.

For the mother

- Breastfeeding helps develop a very special bond between mother and baby.
- It is more convenient, always available at the correct temperature and cheaper than formula feeding.
- It burns calories in the mother and helps with losing weight that was gained during pregnancy.
- It makes the uterus contract back down to normal size faster and slows bleeding following delivery.
- Breastfeeding mothers have a lower risk of developing breast cancer.

NURSE FREQUENTLY

- A healthy, full-term baby may breastfeed as often as every hour or space his feedings to every three hours.
- How often to nurse will vary from baby to baby. Watch your baby for signs of hunger, not the clock.
- Nurse as often as the baby requests, or when you feel the need to reduce the fullness of your breasts.
- Awaken the baby if it has been 3-4 hours since the last feeding.
- Frequent feeding will help the mother make more milk and will prevent problems like sore nipples and engorgement of the breasts.

BABY'S POSITION AT THE BREAST

- Whether lying down or sitting, be sure that the baby's tummy is facing your tummy.
- Support the breast with four fingers underneath the breast and the thumb above. Make sure your fingers are well away from the nipple and baby’s mouth.
- Stroke the baby's lips and cheek closest to the breast gently with your finger or nipple.
- When the baby's mouth is open wide enough, place all of your nipple and as much of the dark area around the nipple as possible into your baby's mouth.
- Pull the baby in close so the tip of the nose and the baby’s cheeks touch the breast during the feeding.

FEEDINGS

- The length of each feeding varies from baby to baby and from feeding to feeding.
- The baby must suck about two to three minutes for your milk to get to the him. This is called a “let down.” For this reason, allow the baby to feed on each breast as long as he wants. He will end the feeding when he has received the right balance of nutrients.
- To break the suction, put your finger into the corner of the baby's mouth and slide it between his gums before removing your breast from his mouth. This will help prevent sore nipples.

REDUCING BREAST ENGORGEMENT

- In the first week after your baby is born, you may experience signs of breast engorgement. When breasts are engorged, they feel heavy, warm, full and may be tender to the touch. You can reduce engorgement if you:
  - Nurse frequently, every 2-3 hours. Mothers who breastfeed early and often have fewer problems with engorgement.
  - Place light ice packs (bags of frozen corn or peas work well) on your breasts between feedings. This reduces swelling. Wrap the ice packs in a lightweight towel to protect your skin.
  - Apply moist hot packs to your breast for 5-10 minutes before each feeding. This increases circulation and helps the milk flow.

- Gently massage your breast before and during the feeding.
- Make sure that the baby empties at least one breast at every feeding before switching sides.
- Use a breast pump to empty the breasts if your baby is sleepy or not nursing well. You may also want to pump if you are returning to work or or you feel you are getting engorged.

- Avoid bottle feeds, pacifiers or supplemental feedings of water or juice in place of breastfeeding.
- Be sure the baby is latched on and positioned properly while breastfeeding.
- Prevent fatigue, stress and anemia.
- Wear a supportive bra, avoiding underwire styles.
- Eat a balanced diet with enough fluids.

If you follow these suggestions, your engorgement should improve in 24-48 hours. If you are still experiencing difficulty, call your lactation consultant or caregiver.

IS MY BABY GETTING ENOUGH MILK?

Sometimes, mothers worry about whether their babies are getting enough milk. You can be assured that your baby is getting enough milk if:

- The baby is actively sucking and you hear swallowing.
- The baby nurses at least 8-12 times in a 24 hour time period. Nurse him until he unlatches himself or falls asleep at the first breast (at least 10-20 minutes), then offer the second side.
- The baby is wetting 5-6 disposable diapers (6-8 cloth diapers) in a 24 hour period by 5-6 days of age.
- The baby is having at least 2-3 stools every 24 hours for the first few months. Breast milk is all the food your baby needs. It is not necessary for your baby to have water or formula. In fact, to help your breasts make more milk, it is best not to give your baby supplemental feedings during the early weeks.
- The stool should be soft and yellow.
- The baby should gain 4-6 ounces per week after he is 4 days old.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Take care of your breasts by:

- Bathing or showering daily.
- Avoiding the use of soaps on your nipples.
- Start feedings on your left breast at one feeding and on your right breast at the next feeding.
- You will notice an increase in your milk supply 2-5 days after delivery. You may feel some discomfort from engorgement, which makes your breasts very firm and often tender. Engorgement “peaks” out within 24 to 48 hours. In the meantime, apply warm moist towels to your breasts for 5-10 minutes before feeding. Gentle massage and expression of some milk before feeding will soften your breasts, making it easier for your baby to latch on. Wear a well fitting nursing bra and air dry your nipples for 10-15 minutes after each feeding.
- Only use cotton bra pads.
- Only use pure lanolin on your nipples after nursing. You do not need to wash it off before nursing.

Take care of yourself by:

- Eating well-balanced meals and nutritious snacks.
- Drinking milk, fruit juice and water to satisfy your thirst (about 8 glasses/day).
- Getting plenty of rest.
- Increase calcium in your diet (1200mg/day).
- Avoid foods that you notice affect the baby in a bad way.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have any questions or difficulty with breastfeeding.
- You need help.
- You have a hard, red, sore area on your breast, accompanied by a fever of 100.5º F (38.1º C) or more.
- Your baby is too sleepy to eat well or is having trouble sleeping.
- Your baby is wetting less than 6 diapers per day, by 5 days of age.

- Your baby's skin or white part of his/her eyes is more yellow than it was in the hospital.
- You feel depressed.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 10/14/2010
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