Breastfeeding & Inducing Lactation For Mothers who Adopt

Many mothers who adopt children or have a child using a surrogate want to breastfeed their babies. Chances are good you will be able to produce milk for your infant, but there are some differences between this and feeding a baby with whom you have been pregnant. It is important to set realistic expectations as very few women will be able to make all the milk their baby needs. The process is usually more successful if the mother has been pregnant before. However, many mothers need to also use donated breast milk or infant formula. Any amount of breast milk a baby gets is an added bonus and is better than none.

PRODUCING MILK

If you know 3-4 months in advance that your baby will be born and you want to breastfeed, you can begin to prepare your breasts to lactate.

- Hormones, usually in the form of birth control pills are taken until about 6 weeks before the baby is born.
- When the hormones are stopped, it is best to start pumping your breasts with a double electric hospital grade pump. A Lactation Specialist can advise you where to rent one. Pump every 3 hours or 8 times a day for 20 minutes on both breasts. If you cannot do this, do what you can.
- Medication prescribed by your doctor or herbal remedies can help increase your milk supply. Fenugreek and Blessed Thistle are herbs known to help with lactation by raising your prolactin (the milk producing hormone) level.
- The prescription medication Metoclopramide has also been found useful.
- Any milk you are able to pump can be frozen for future use by your baby.

Lactation is a hormonal response to a physical action. Therefore, the combination of hormone treatment and pumping will encourage the production of milk. Once the baby is born and is put to the breast, the mother's body often responds to the smell, sound and feel of her baby by increasing the milk produced. Using a supplemental nursing system to provide extra donated breast milk or formula at the breast while the baby nurses will ensure that your infant gets enough nutrition. Ask a Lactation Specialist to help you find and use this device.

SEE YOUR CAREGIVER AND A LACTATION SPECIALIST IF:

You are a woman adopting a baby who wants to breastfeed and need guidance concerning your specific situation. They may be able to help you start a milk supply and advise you as you make important decisions about nourishing your baby.

Most of this information is courtesy of the La Leche League.

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