

What Breastfeeding Information Should I Know Before My Baby is Born?

Today more mothers are choosing to breastfeed their babies because breast milk is the perfect food for babies. It is easy to digest and gives the baby protection from many allergies and infectious diseases. Breastfeeding helps the baby develop a sense of trust and security. Mothers find breastfeeding very satisfying and in addition gain personal health benefits such as lower incidence of breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis later in life. The whole family will find that breastfeeding saves time, money and energy, making it easier for the mother to be active and care for the needs of other family members.

Learning About Breastfeeding

There are many sources of information that can help you get off to a good start. The more you know about breastfeeding in advance, the better things will go. **Some examples include:**

- ♥ **Prenatal Breastfeeding Classes.** Your local hospital or childbirth educator will be able to let you know if these are available to you.
- ♥ **Seek out Breastfeeding Mothers.** If you have the chance, spend time around breastfeeding mothers and babies to become familiar with common baby behavior.
- ♥ **Attend a La Leche League Meeting.** You will have a chance to ask questions and share the experiences of others.

Read books written by lactation professionals:

- ♥ **The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding** by La Leche League International
- ♥ **The Nursing Mothers Companion** by Kathleen Huggins, RN, MS
- ♥ **Dr. Mom's Guide for Breastfeeding** by Maryann Neifert, MD
- ♥ **The Complete Idiots Guide to Breastfeeding** by Anne P. Mark, BSN, RN, IBCLC

Read other Ameda Answer Sheets:

- ♥ Questions Mothers Ask About Breastfeeding.
- ♥ How Do I Hold My Baby While Breastfeeding?
- ♥ How Do I Know My Baby Is Getting Enough Breast Milk?
- ♥ Why Do My Breasts Hurt?

Access the Internet for more information. There are many good websites on breastfeeding. Run a search on the word "Breastfeeding" and you will come up with several matches.

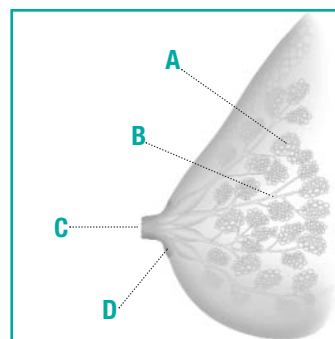
Include your family in learning. Fathers, grandparents and other children should also be included in learning about breastfeeding. When your whole family is knowledgeable and supportive, your breastfeeding experience will be more rewarding. If anyone has a concern before the birth, it can be discussed with a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider.

There are many sources of information, each with its own philosophy and approach. By using several sources to increase your knowledge, you will have a better idea of what you can expect and how you can make choices that are best for you.

Understand How Your Breasts Make Milk

The breast can be compared in structure to a cluster of grapes. The alveoli are the breast cells that make and secrete the milk. The "grapes" represent "A" the alveoli.

Each group of alveoli connect to a small ductile system "B" that flows into larger ducts which then lead out through the nipple. The "stems" of the grape clusters represent the duct system.



Each breast has 6-8 of these alveoli (grapes) and ductile systems (stems) emptying through 6-8 openings in the nipple "C".

When you breastfeed, your baby's jaws compress the areola "D" against the baby's palate, the tongue moves in a wave-like motion from front to back and draws the milk out of the breast.

When the areola is stimulated by your baby's breastfeeding, two hormones are released: prolactin and oxytocin. Prolactin causes your body to make milk and oxytocin causes the milk to be squeezed out of the alveoli and into the ducts (the let-down reflex). The more your baby breastfeeds and the better he removes milk from the breasts, the more milk you will make!

How Your Body Prepares for Breastfeeding

During pregnancy, the skin on the breast will become more elastic and the nipple and areola may become darker in color. There are lubricating glands (Montgomery glands) on the areola that secrete oil that keeps the nipples soft and pliable. It also has a scent that the baby uses to locate the breast. You can't smell it, but your baby will be able to. Do not remove this oil with soaps or other drying agents such as alcohol or witch hazel.

You may also notice a change in your breast size during pregnancy. Tenderness and swelling are indications that the breasts are changing appropriately and the milk producing glands are expanding in preparation for breastfeeding. Women who have small breasts may notice more changes than those with larger breasts. If you do not experience any breast changes during pregnancy, be sure to discuss it with a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or your health care provider.

Your breasts may become lumpy during pregnancy as the milk producing tissue expands. Examine your breasts periodically and become familiar with the changes that occur so you will be aware of differences that could indicate a deviation from normal. Any concerns should be directed to your health care provider.

Finally, you may find it more comfortable during these breast changes to wear a well-fitting, supportive bra. During your second trimester, purchase one or two bras at a place where someone knows how to properly fit bras. The bra should provide good support without binding or causing pressure on any part of the breast tissue.

Checking for Flat or Inverted Nipples

There are three kinds of basic nipple shapes:

- ♥ Everted nipples (protrude)
- ♥ Flat nipples (do not protrude)
- ♥ Inverted nipples (retract inward)

Check which kind of nipples you have by grasping the edge of the areola with your middle finger below, and thumb on top, and gently squeeze. This “pinch test” will indicate if your nipples are flat or inverted. Doing this test when you are 3-6 months pregnant allows you time to treat your nipples, if needed, before your baby arrives. Check what happens to your nipple when you gently compress the tissue.

If you find that you have flat or inverted nipples, seek assistance from a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider who can offer guidance. Breast shells may be recommended to help draw out your flat or inverted nipples. They apply gentle pressure around the base of your nipple to stretch the adhesions and allow your nipples to evert.



Have You Had a Previous Breast Surgery?

If you have had breast augmentation or reduction surgery, biopsies or cysts removed, it is critical to share this information with your health care provider and perhaps a Board Certified Lactation Consultant. Breast augmentation is usually not a problem for breastfeeding. However, extensive breast reduction surgery may be, depending on the type of surgery done.

Develop a plan of care for you and your baby. This may involve using a breast pump for the first weeks and observing the baby carefully to determine he is getting adequate intake.

If you have had biopsies or other surgeries, there may be some damage to the duct system in those areas. This may cause a blockage which prevents that part of the breast from emptying. In a short time, that part of the breast will cease to produce milk, but the remainder of the breast will continue to function normally and you will be able to produce plenty of milk for your baby.

If at any time you have pain, you are unsure of how well the baby is latched-on or the baby does not seem satisfied, obtain help from a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider.

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References on File.

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