



Breastfeeding Guide and Tips

Choosing how to feed your new baby is a very important decision as it can have an effect on both your baby's health and your own. This information sheet gives you some useful facts about the benefits of breastfeeding for you to consider before you make up your mind. There are also tips to help get breastfeeding off to a good start and information about the support you can expect from our providers, Kootenai Health and in the community that can help you with breastfeeding.

Why is breast milk so important?

~Your breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. Breast milk has important protective antibodies unavailable in any other milk or formula source. That is why leading health organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF recommend breastfeeding for at least the first 12 months of your baby's life.

Benefits of breastfeeding your baby:

- **Best nutrition:** Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants. A mother's milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water and protein that is needed for a baby's growth and development. Breast milk is readily available and affordable which helps to ensure that infants get adequate sustenance.
- **Greater protection from infections:** Breast milk contains antibodies that can protect infants from bacterial and viral infections, such as diarrhea, lower respiratory infections, ear infections, bacteremia, bacterial meningitis, botulism, urinary tract infections as well as many other illnesses.
- **Higher IQs:** Breast fed babies score slightly higher on IQ tests, especially in babies who were born prematurely.
- **Easier to digest:** Most babies find it easier to digest breast milk than they do formula.

- **Lower risk for obesity:** Breastfed infants tend to gain less unnecessary weight and tend to be leaner. This may result in being less overweight later in life.
- **Improved development of premature babies:** Premature babies do better when breastfed compared to premature babies who are fed formula.

Benefits of breastfeeding for the mother:

- **Lose weight:** Nursing uses up extra calories, making it easier to lose the pounds gained during pregnancy.
- **Helps the uterus to return to normal size:** It helps the uterus to get back to its original size and lessens bleeding a woman may have after giving birth.
- **Delay menstrual cycle:** Breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding delays the return of normal ovulation and menstrual cycles. (You should talk to your provider about birth control choices)
- **Save time and money:** You do not have to purchase, measure and mix formula. There is no need to warm bottles in the middle of the night.

Breastfeeding Basics

~Your breasts contain an amazing milk production system that is triggered by your pregnancy hormones. As soon as your baby is born, your breastfeeding hormones start working. Your baby nursing at your breast signals your body to start making more milk. Frequent feeding in the first 2-3 weeks after delivery will help to decrease problems with engorgement and ensure a good milk supply.

- In the early weeks of breastfeeding your baby will need to feed 8-12 times during a 24 hour period.
- The length of a breastfeeding session can vary.
- Try not to breastfeed by the clock, but rather when your baby seems hungry.
- Both frequency and length of feeding sessions will continue to change as your baby grows.

Getting Started

~Breastfeeding takes a little practice. Sometimes it takes a while for babies to get used to the new world around them. In the first few days after birth, the initial milk produced is called colostrum. It is thick, yellowish in color and contains large amounts of antioxidants and growth factors the baby needs. Colostrum helps your baby's digestive tract and acts like a first vaccination.

~Over the next few weeks the quantity and consistency of your breast milk changes as your body adapts to your baby's needs. **If you have concerns regarding your baby getting enough to eat, call your pediatric or family medicine healthcare provider.** There are many support groups, classes and lactation services in our area that can help you with this as well. Lactation services at Kootenai Health will come to your postpartum room and offer help while you are in the hospital. If you are having problems after you have been discharged, lactation services are available for support as well.

Common Issues

You should call your provider or pediatrician if you have any of these problems:

Thrush: A type of yeast infection.

Symptoms: Mother

- Itching, burning nipples
- Flaking skin on or around nipple
- Bright pink skin on breast where baby's mouth touches during feedings
- Shooting pains in the breast during or after feeding

Symptoms: Baby

- Creamy looking white areas inside the mouth
- A film in the mouth on the gums or tongue
- Diaper rash with raised patches or shiny skin in the diaper area
- Sudden feeding problems, pulling off or crying
- Gassiness or colic

Mastitis: An infection in the breast.

Symptoms: Mother

- A painful red lump or swollen area in the breast
- Fever, chills and/or flu like symptoms
- Call your provider for treatment

Common causes:

- Stress/fatigue/illness
- Plugged milk ducts
- Long periods between breastfeeding or pumping
- Breastfeeding difficulties