

# Getting Started with Breastfeeding



**Breastfeeding is one of the greatest gifts you can give your baby, and in many countries, breastfeeding is the cultural norm. However, in the UK, although new figures suggest that over 70% of women begin breastfeeding their newborn babies, only 48% continue beyond six weeks, and at six months, only 25% are still breastfeeding while supplementing with artificial milk (source: Infant Feeding Study 2005 carried out for the Office of National Statistics). All four UK health departments recommend *exclusive* breastfeeding for the first six months of life, yet less than 1% of women in the UK are exclusively breastfeeding at this stage.**



## Benefits For Your Baby and You

Breastfeeding offers protective health benefits to both babies and mothers. The closeness between a mother and her breastfed infant helps form an incredible bond while offering the baby a sense of comfort and security. Breastmilk is easily digested and provides the essential nutrients, vitamins, proteins, fats and antibodies that your baby needs to develop physically and neurologically. In fact, studies have shown that breastmilk contains immunological agents that cannot be replicated by science. Research shows breastfeeding helps to protect your baby against allergies, reduces the rate of serious illness and makes him less likely to get sick. There are benefits for mum too, such as decreasing risk of breast and ovarian cancers and osteoporosis. Studies show that breastfeeding mothers show less postnatal anxiety and depression than artificial feeding mothers, and breastfeeding can also help you lose extra pregnancy pounds and help your womb shrink back to its normal size. And breastfeeding is free!

## Getting Started

Many women seek out information while they are pregnant, so that they know what to expect and are aware of the sources of support and help with breastfeeding. Some read about breastfeeding in books and magazines, or watch breastfeeding videos and DVDs to be as prepared as possible. Others talk to a breastfeeding counsellor or lactation consultant or attend a breastfeeding class, breastfeeding drop-in or voluntary breastfeeding group.

This gives them an opportunity to ask questions and perhaps meet the breastfeeding specialist who will be available to help following the birth. It is good to identify someone to call should you need some help or support, especially in the early weeks when you are learning to breastfeed.

## Get Into Position

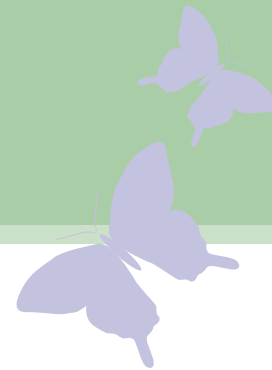
Proper positioning of both mother and baby and in particular the attachment of baby to the breast is important, as this can help prevent sore nipples and insufficient milk supply. You can get comfortable by either sitting up or lying in bed, or sitting in an armchair, sofa or rocking chair. Many mothers find creating a flat lap helps in the early days, either by elevating the feet or sitting on a pillow. Some mothers raise their babies to breast height, others use the natural nurturing approach of holding their babies diagonally across their bodies. The most common breastfeeding positions are across the lap and with the baby's feet out behind the mother.

**Across Lap - Cradle Hold** - The baby's head will rest in the crook of your elbow or on your forearm with his whole body facing you, and will be supported with the same arm beneath his back and your hand on his thigh or bottom.

**Cross-Cradle Hold** - The baby is supported at breast height by the opposite arm to the breast being offered. Your elbow is on the baby's bottom with your forearm along his back. Your palm is on his upper back, fingers and thumb either side of the neck. Your forefinger supports the base of his head under the ear.

**Feet Out Behind - Rugby Hold or Clutch Position** - The baby lies on his side between your side and flexed arm with his feet out behind you. The baby's shoulders, neck and the base of his head are supported by your hand, allowing your opposite hand to hold the breast if needed.

Regardless of the position, make sure that the baby's head and body are facing the breast, and help him to come onto the breast chin-first, aiming the nipple to the roof of his mouth when the mouth is open wide. Your baby needs to take a good part of the areolar tissue into his wide, gaping mouth in order to be properly latched on. Proper positioning (where the nipple goes deep into the baby's mouth and so is protected at the back of his mouth) can ease the pain of sore nipples and help ensure your baby is getting the proper amount of milk.



While it is hard to quantify just how much milk a baby is getting from the breast, continuous weight gain and alertness is an indication that he is getting enough. Nappies are another good indicator that your baby is being adequately nourished. Wet nappies indicate good hydration, while poo nappies indicate enough calories. By about day four, mums and dads may change at least three small poo nappies (the size of a 2p coin) and about six wet nappies each day. As your baby grows, this stays approximately three poo nappies, but more copious, and six wet nappies a day. However, some babies have different patterns. Your baby's poo nappies will change during the first few days from black and tarry to greenish, then to yellow. This mustard yellow stool is typically loose and unformed, like pea soup. If you have any questions or concerns, contact a health professional.

## How Often Do I Feed?

The first milk your baby suckles after birth is colostrum; a milk ranging in colour from pale lemon to dark orange. This is the perfect food for your baby and the first feed is very important. It comes in small quantities (average 37mls over the first 24 hours, gradually increasing daily as the baby suckles more) as newborn babies have tummies the size of a marble (an average feed is 7mls to 14mls. A teaspoon is 5mls). When your full term milk comes in on day 3-5 his tummy grows to accommodate the greater amounts (about 500mls every 24 hours, rising to about 750mls every 24 hours by 3 months). So it will not be a surprise to find out your baby needs to feed often at first: about 8 to 12 times in a 24 hour period. Some babies feed almost continuously for several hours, then sleep for a while, then repeat this pattern. Others feed about every 40 minutes for the first couple of days. Some babies are sleepy for the first few days and need to be encouraged to feed at least three-hourly. Feeds become more spread out as your baby grows older.

## Is My Baby Getting Enough Milk?

As you develop a bond with your baby, you will begin to identify and understand the different sounds and gestures he makes. When your baby is hungry, signs to look for include putting his hands to his mouth, making sucking sounds, the tongue coming out and licking, head moving around in search of the breast, also known as rooting, and fussiness. Crying is a late stage sign of hunger.

## Further Help

In the early weeks of breastfeeding, while you and your baby are both still learning, you may experience engorgement or extreme fullness, and nipples can become sensitive and sore.

Engorgement sometimes happens in the early days when your full term milk comes in. Milk, blood and fluids accumulate in your breasts and they can feel very full. You could try applying a cold compress for the swelling, changing to warm 20 minutes before a feed, perhaps using a basin of warm water or a hot water bottle. Some mums express off a teaspoon or two of breastmilk before the baby goes to the breast, and feed frequently. Other mothers put cold Savoy cabbage leaves in their bra, which research has shown to be helpful.

Nipple soreness and pain are often cited as major reasons why women discontinue breastfeeding. Sore nipples are most commonly caused by uncomfortable attachment of the baby at the breast. If you are struggling, do get help from a breastfeeding counsellor or lactation consultant.

## Useful Organisations

National Childbirth Trust (NCT) Breastfeeding Line:	0300 330 0771
La Leche League:	0845 120 2918
Association of Breastfeeding Mothers:	0844 412 2949

This information is available to download as a pdf from:

[www.lansinoh.co.uk](http://www.lansinoh.co.uk)