

A Parents Guide to Breastfeeding: The First Week

The first weeks of breastfeeding are important as you and your baby learn a new skill. After the first few weeks, many mothers find that breastfeeding gets easier. Frequent nursing in the first weeks encourages an adequate milk supply for the future. Positioning your baby is very important for easier, more comfortable attachment. Be sure your baby opens his mouth wide and takes in a lot of the areola, the darker tissue surrounding the nipple. Breastfeeding should not be terrible uncomfortable. Trust your instincts.

If you feel you need help with positioning your baby, please ask. DAY 1- A sleepy day for most babies, keep him close and nurse whenever he cues (like rooting around or chewing at his hand) or at least every 2-3 hours. If he is sleepy you will need to wake him to nurse. Wake by removing his shirt and rubbing his back in a dimly lit room.

DAY 2- Your baby should nurse 8-12 times. Most babies feed very frequently on the second day. Your baby knows what he is doing, so it's good to relax and let him nurse away. You are not being used as a pacifier. Your baby needs to be close to you and frequent nursings help establish a healthy supply of milk. (remember that pacifiers may cause nipple confusion and sucking problems, so avoid them the first month.) Look for two or more wet diapers and transitional (from darker to lighter) stools.

DAY 3- Your milk may be increasing today and you may notice your baby swallowing more. Your baby may have lost weight but should begin catching up now. Look for 3 or more wet diapers, about 3 stools (getting lighter in color). You may need to hand express a little milk from your breast before feeding to make latching on easier. Nap whenever baby naps. Eat healthfully. You need about 500 extra calories a day so enjoy. Drink to thirst.

DAY 4- Nursing every 2-3 hours, your baby should seem more content after feeding. He may feed several times in a row. Wet diapers should number about 4. His tummy is small. Breastmilk digests rapidly. He may skip a day from having a bowel movement, but if you are concerned check with your doctor.

DAY 5- Today is an important day. Check the list below to see how things are going. If you answer yes, breastfeeding is going well. If you answer no, please contact a breastfeeding specialist for assistance.

Do you feel breastfeeding is going well?

1. Has your milk increased? (Breasts feel fuller, warmer, baby swallowing more)
2. Can your baby latch comfortably and stay attached without difficulty?
3. Does your baby feed well at least 10 minutes each feeding on one side?
4. Does your baby seem alert and asking to eat every 2-3 hours?
5. Do your breasts feel firmer before feeding and softer after?
6. Has any nipple soreness decreased or gone away?
7. Is your baby wetting 6+ diapers and having soft, yellowish bowel movements every 24 hours after the first week?
8. DO you hear swallowing (or see the pause in the chin) when your baby drinks?
9. Does your baby seem more satisfied and content after feeding?
10. If your baby's skin was yellow (jaundiced) is it getting less yellow now?
Have you made arrangements for a follow-up weight check by the time your baby is a week old? By about 14 days he should regain his birth weight. Remember, he will need lots of touching and holding in the early weeks for comfort and healthy development. Breastfeeding is a gift you give yourself and your baby!