

Mother's Breastfeeding FAQ

How long should I breastfeed my baby?

- The AAP recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for about the first 6 months of life. This means your baby needs no additional foods (except Vitamin D) or fluids unless medically indicated. Babies should continue to breastfeed for a year and for as long as is mutually desired by the mother and baby. Breastfeeding should be supported by your physician for as long as it is the right choice for you and your baby.

When should I start feeding my baby solid foods?

- Solid foods need to be introduced to ensure that your baby gets proper nutrition around 6 months of age. Ask your doctor about when to introduce solid foods and how to do it.

How do I prepare for breastfeeding?

- Learn as much as you can about breastfeeding before your baby is born. Read books and other information about breastfeeding and consider taking a breastfeeding class at your doctor's office, hospital, or WIC (if you are eligible). Involve your partner in learning about breastfeeding. Your partner's support will be beneficial to your breastfeeding success. Tell other family members and friends about your plans to breastfeed and gain their support.
- *Prepare for Breastfeeding Success – Make Sure You and Your Health Care Professional Have All of the Facts!*  is a handy tip sheet that will help you discuss breastfeeding with your health care provider. Bring this with you to your next appointment.
- If you plan to return to work or school while breastfeeding and cannot go to the baby or have the baby brought to you to breastfeed, be sure to talk to your baby's caregiver about providing your breast milk while you are away. Make sure the caregiver is comfortable and willing to provide breast milk and knows the proper storage recommendations.

How can I find a breastfeeding friendly medical practice?

- It is recommended that expectant parents begin interviewing pediatricians for their baby while they are pregnant. Bring this list of questions (and hints about the responses you should look to receive) to help you interview pediatricians. 

Who should I call if need breastfeeding help?

- If you are concerned about how breastfeeding is going, don't wait. Call someone for help. Start with your pediatrician's office. Your pediatrician should be able to assess how breastfeeding is going and offer you support. For some cases, you may be referred to a lactation consultant.

Should I join a breastfeeding support group? How can they help me?

- Seek out breastfeeding support groups in your area before your baby is born and consider attending one while pregnant and becoming familiar with the leaders. Talking with other women about their breastfeeding experiences may be helpful and give you a circle of friends to call for help after the baby is born.

How often should I nurse in the first few weeks?

- If you and your baby are healthy after birth, it is best to breastfeed within the first hour after delivery. While in the hospital, keep the baby with you in your room so you can learn his hunger cues and respond promptly. Some newborns feed as often as every 1.5 hours, while others feed about every 3 hours. Breastfed newborns will feed 8-12 or more times per 24 hours (once your milk has come in). If your baby isn't waking on his own during the first few weeks, wake him if 3-4 hours have passed since the last feeding. Talk to your pediatrician if your baby continues to have a hard time waking to eat.

What if my baby is premature or ill?

- Many premature and seriously ill babies can eventually breastfeed. Human milk has been shown to be very beneficial to premature and sick newborns by helping growth and preventing disease. If you have a sick or premature baby, begin expressing colostrum by hand or pump as soon as possible in the hospital. If you are discharged home and the baby stays in the hospital, talk to your doctor about expressing your milk at home and having it be fed to your infant by a feeding tube in the hospital. You will need to express your milk as often as your baby would have breastfed (approximately 8 times per 24 hour period). A double-electric breast pump (usually provided by the hospital) is most effective. As your baby gets healthy, ask your doctor for assistance in establishing direct breastfeeding. The hospital may have lactation consultants to help you do this. Be aware that this may happen quickly or take some time to establish.

How should I store expressed breast milk?

- Wash your hands before expressing or handling your milk.
- Use only clean containers to store expressed milk. Use collection containers specific for the purpose of storing human milk. Don't use ordinary plastic bags or formula bottle bags for storing milk.
- Freshly expressed milk can remain at room temperature for up to 4 hours.
- Use refrigerated milk within 48 hours.

How do I freeze my milk?

- Freeze milk if you will not be using it within 24 hours. Frozen milk is good for at least 3 months (some experts suggest 3-6 months if kept in a 0 degrees F freezer).
- Store milk at the back of the freezer — never in the freezer door.
- Make sure to label the milk with the date you froze it and possibly your child's name if you are bringing it to an out-of-home child care facility. Talk with your child care provider about how they require breast milk be stored and labeled.

How much milk should I store at a time?

- Freeze 2-4 ounces of milk at a time, depending on the average amount of a single feeding for your baby. You may also want to freeze some small amounts for certain situations.

How do I thaw milk and serve it (or have it served) to my baby?

- Thaw milk in the refrigerator or you can thaw it by swirling in a bowl of warm water (do not shake!).
- Heating milk in microwave ovens or bottle warmers is not safe. Excess heat can destroy the important proteins and vitamins in the milk. If you will heat the milk in the storage container you might wish to avoid rigid plastic bottles with recycling # 7 in the triangle to avoid exposure to BPA, a potential hormone disrupter. For more information, [visit the BPA Web site](#).
- Thawed milk must be used within 24 hours.
- Don't refreeze your milk.

What should I do about breastfeeding my baby if my family is involved in a disaster?

- Breastfeeding is disaster preparedness. If you are breastfeeding you will not need to worry about feeding your baby formula that may not be available. Mothers can breastfeed under difficult circumstances with the proper support. View the [Infant Feeding During a Disaster: Breastfeeding and Other Options](#)  fact sheet for more information.

The recommendations in this publication do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or serve as a standard of medical care. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate. This content is for informational purpose only.