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Breastfeeding 101: What Moms Need to Know



Judy Koutsky
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Here's an overview of what to expect when you begin nursing.



Do you need a breastfeeding 101 course? Don't worry, you're not alone. Nursing will be less overwhelming when you have an idea of what to expect. While breastfeeding might seem to require a lot of work in the beginning, you'll soon settle into a manageable routine. "As the baby gets older, her stomach capacity will increase as well as the storage capacity of the mom's breasts," says [Emily Cope](#), a registered dietitian nutritionist who works with new moms. Newborns often feed every two hours, but don't worry - you won't be on that nursing schedule for the entire next year.

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BREASTFEEDING 101

Some tips to get off our chest

breastfeeding 101

And read about these [36 Benefits of Breastfeeding for You and Your Baby](#).

Here's what you need to know before, during and after you start nursing:

How You Can Prepare

1. Don't Go Out and Buy a Ton of Things

Sure, you'll need a few nursing bras, but don't buy a ton. "It's a good idea to wait a few days until your milk supply comes in before spending tons of money on nursing bras that might not fit," says [Jennifer Pitkin](#), an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). Also, you may or may not need a breast pump, so hold off on making a major (and expensive) purchase like this until you're sure it's necessary. Most hospitals have breast pumps, so you might be able to try one out while you're there.

2. Remember to Drink Lots of Water and Eat Healthy Foods

After having a baby, you're exhausted, and the last thing you're thinking about is meal preparation. But in order to be successful at breastfeeding, you'll need to consume plenty of water and eat nutritious meals. "You'll be burning 500 plus calories a day" extra, says Pitkin, so you'll need energy to nurse continuously.

3. Keep a Positive Attitude

"Many breastfeeding problems are caused by misinformation," says Cope. Don't pay too much attention to old wives' tales or advice you heard from a friend of a friend. Before you have your baby, you can educate yourself by taking a breastfeeding class. If you have any questions, you should reach out to your doctor or lactation consultant. You can also join a breastfeeding support group led by a trained professional.

What You Should Do During Breastfeeding

"There may be a learning curve, it might take some time, but nursing almost always works out, regardless of what friends or family may say," says Pitkin. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

- **If You're Experiencing Pain**

If you're in pain, something is amiss. You should make an appointment with a professional to get yourself checked out.

- **If You Want More Information**

"Physicians can be hugely supportive of breastfeeding, but not all receive breastfeeding education during their schooling," says Pitkin. If you want more information, you should ask to see a lactation specialist in the hospital or schedule an appointment if you're already home. These experts are board-certified in breastfeeding issues.

- **If You're Going to Supplement**

"Supplementing after feeding your baby because you think he's still hungry may reduce your supply," says Pitkin. If you're going to supplement, a good option is to pump to keep up your milk supply.

- **If You're Not Producing Enough Milk**

Some women fear that they are not producing enough milk. "In most cases pumping milk with a quality breast pump can help increase milk, as can nursing more frequently," says Cope. Talk to your doctor or lactation consultant if you're worried about your milk supply.

What You Should Know Post-Nursing

"Your body will change, and that's okay," says Pitkin. Some women shed a lot of weight, but some don't. Every woman's body is different. While nursing, many women increase a cup or two in bra size, but "your breasts almost always return to pre-pregnancy size after weaning," says Pitkin.

Also, keep in mind that the longer you breastfeed, the better it is for your health. According to Pitkin, "you're actually reducing your risk for reproductive cancers just by feeding your baby."

While breastfeeding is natural, it can take a while to get the hang of it. This breastfeeding 101 gives you a quick overview of what to expect when nursing, but you should reach out to your doctor or lactation specialist for more information. Make sure to enjoy this special time with your baby!

Want more breastfeeding tips? Check out [10 of the Best Nipple Creams for Moms](#). Want an extra hand with your newborn? [Find a doula](#) on Care.com.

Judy Koutsky is the former editorial director of KIWI magazine, a green parenting publication. She was also executive editor of [Parenting.com](#), AOL Parent and [BabyTalk.com](#). Follow her on [twitter](#).

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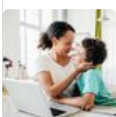
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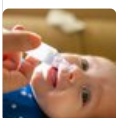
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