

# Baby on the Way



# It's normal to have questions!

## Why breastfeed?

You've done your best to keep your baby healthy during your pregnancy. Breastfeeding is the natural next step. Nothing compares to breastmilk; it contains all the nutrients your baby needs to grow. Moms choose to breastfeed because of the decreased risk of diabetes and other illnesses for both mom and baby, less constipation for baby, weight loss for mom, and convenience. The benefits of breastfeeding begin from the first moments after your baby's birth and last for many years.

## How long should I breastfeed?

Your breastmilk is all your baby needs for the first 6 months of life. Continuing to breastfeed through the first year of life is what the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends. It's your choice - the longer you breastfeed, the more benefits you and your baby enjoy.

## What's normal in the beginning?

Breastfeeding may be a little bumpy in the beginning - remember, you have never done this before and neither has your baby! A WIC nutritionist or breastfeeding specialist can help you get breastfeeding off to a good start. After a while, most women find nursing relaxing and enjoy the quiet time with their babies.

## My mom and my friends couldn't breastfeed - does that mean that I can't?

Those that are closest to us are eager to share their stories, but yours will probably be different. Breastfeeding can be a success for you. Learn all you can about breastfeeding before you have your baby and find at least one person you can rely on who will support you in your feeding decision. Don't know anyone? Ask WIC for a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor who will provide you with lots of loving support. Just remember, breastfeeding is a gift that only you can give to your baby. Being prepared ahead of time helps you to make your story about breastfeeding a success.

## **Will breastfeeding hurt?**

In the beginning, your breasts may feel tender, but breastfeeding should not be painful. If a woman has pain when she nurses, it is usually because her baby is not in a good nursing position or because the baby is not latching well on the breast. If breastfeeding hurts, ask for help. Your WIC nutritionist or breastfeeding specialist can help you. Before leaving the hospital, make sure you're comfortable breastfeeding. If not, ask a nurse or lactation consultant for help.

## **What if I have a Cesarean-section?**

You can breastfeed after a C-section! It may take a little more time and support in the early days, but nurses and lactation consultants in the hospital can help with pain management and finding a position that works best for you and your baby.

## **Can I eat my favorite foods?**

Yes! You can eat the foods you normally eat. Of course, eating a variety of healthy foods will help you feel better and give you more energy.

## **Can I breastfeed if I smoke or drink alcohol?**

Yes, but since both nicotine and alcohol pass into breast milk it is best to limit smoking and drinking. Ask your WIC nutritionist about how you can breastfeed safely.

## **What about birth control?**

Since you can get pregnant while you are breastfeeding, it is important to use birth control. Your health care provider can help you select birth control methods that are safe for nursing mothers.

## Can I continue to breastfeed if I have to return to work or school?

Yes! You have many options to choose from to help you continue nursing your baby. You can work with your WIC nutritionist or breastfeeding specialist to come up with a plan that works for you and your baby when you need to go back to work or school.

## What if I take medication?

Before taking any medication or herbs, including cold or allergy medications, talk to your health care provider or breastfeeding specialist. There are safe choices for most medicines that will allow you to continue to breastfeed.

## Are there any reasons NOT to breastfeed?

Yes. Breastfeeding is not advised for women who:

- Use any illegal drugs.
- Have active untreated tuberculosis, Human T-Cell Leukemia Virus Type 1 (HTLV-1), or a herpes lesion on the breast.
- Have AIDS or are HIV+; if you don't know your HIV status, it is important that you reach out to your provider for testing.

**Plan to provide  
your baby with the best -  
plan to breastfeed!**

**1-800-WIC-1007**



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