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THE HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE:

A Great Start to Breastfeeding



Congratulations on your pregnancy!

While welcoming a new member to your family is exciting, it can also feel overwhelming. One thing many new moms are nervous about is breastfeeding. Getting breastfeeding off to a good start those first few days in the hospital can really help make breastfeeding easier for you and your baby.

The good news is there are things you can start doing now to prepare. You are actually doing one of them now! This lesson plan is designed to give you the tools you need to meet your breastfeeding goals. Let's get started!

During Pregnancy

The best way to prepare for breastfeeding is getting as much information as you can before baby is born. Here are a few suggestions that will help you get breastfeeding off to a great start.

- Read books and articles about breastfeeding. www.kellymom.com and www.breastmilkcounts.com are both great places to start.
- Watch videos on breastfeeding. Great informational videos are available at: www.breastmilkcounts.com. Just click on “Mom’s Playground” at the top of the page and then “Video Blogs” on the next page.
- Talk to a friend or family member who has successfully breastfed. If you do not know anyone who has breastfed, try joining an online support group.
- Take a breastfeeding class, join your local La Leche League, or attend a local breastfeeding support group. Many moms attend while still pregnant to get information and establish friendships before baby comes.
- Ask your local WIC clinic if they have a breastfeeding peer counselor or a designated breastfeeding expert. Set up a breastfeeding consultation before you deliver to discuss a plan for breastfeeding that specifically meets your needs.



Remember:

You are not alone! There is a large support system waiting to help you reach your breastfeeding goals. While in the hospital, ask to see a lactation consultant even if you think things are going well. Talk to your WIC clinic about breastfeeding support that is available to you. Many WIC offices have Internationally Board-Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) and Registered Dietitians that are available to you free of charge.

The Oklahoma Breastfeeding Hotline is a free helpline that is staffed 24 hours a day 7 days a week by IBCLCs: 1-877-271-MILK (6455)



Encourage those who will be helping you after delivery to learn more about breastfeeding too. Talk to your doctor or midwife about your desire to breastfeed and include breastfeeding in your birth plan. Here are some things to include in your birth plan that will help you and baby get a great start to breastfeeding.

- **Skin to skin immediately after delivery.** Request that your baby be placed on your chest immediately after birth and before he or she is bathed. It is important to do a lot of skin to skin with baby in the hospital AND after going home. Here are some benefits for baby and you:

For Baby:

- Better digestion and absorption of nutrients
- Baby can more easily regulate their body temperature
- Decreases infant crying
- Stabilizes breathing and heart rate
- Prevents low blood sugar (which is a common reason for supplementation)
- Improves breastfeeding success
- Increases bonding

For Mom:

- Increases breastfeeding success
- Increases milk supply
- Decreases post-partum depression
- Decreases post-partum bleeding
- Increases bonding with baby

- **No pacifiers or bottles.** Giving artificial nipples too early can cause baby to have difficulty latching to the breast and hide important hunger cues. Baby will suck on his or her fingers, smack his or her lips, and root. It is important to latch your baby at the first signs of hunger as crying can make latching harder.
- **Rooming in with your baby.** The first 24-48 hours after birth are an important time to get breastfeeding well established. Keeping your baby with you will ensure you and your baby are able to learn each other and how to breastfeed without interruptions.
- **Limit visitors.** A constant flow of visitors can be exhausting and often interfere with establishing breastfeeding. Delaying feedings can lead to less breast emptying, which can lead to low milk supply and weight gain for the baby. It is okay to ask hospital staff to limit visitors for you because saying no can be hard. It is also okay to let family and friends know now that you would prefer they wait to visit until you are home and settled.

After Delivery: The First Few Days

Now that we have talked about what you can do to get ready, let's talk about those first few days in the hospital. Many moms are surprised when their breasts don't automatically feel full after delivery. This is normal. Your body begins making colostrum between 16 and 22 weeks of pregnancy. This is the milk your baby will receive the first few days of life. Your colostrum is thick and rich in antibodies to coat your baby's intestines and protect them from germs, bacteria, and infection. A teaspoon of colostrum is all your baby needs on his or her first day of life. As your baby's stomach size grows, so does your milk supply.

Let's summarize how you and baby can get breastfeeding off to the best start possible.

Do skin to skin immediately following the birth of your baby and that entire first hour of life. Continue doing skin to skin as much as possible, especially in the early days of life.

Latch your baby within one hour of birth and at least 8-12 times a day. Remember to use the latch techniques discussed to prevent soreness and increase how much breast milk baby gets. Follow your baby's hunger cues as previously discussed in order to know when to latch your baby. If your baby sleeps for more than 2-3 hours, wake him or her to nurse.

No bottles or pacifiers. Offering a bottle or pacifier can cause baby to have difficulty latching to the breast or latch incorrectly, which can cause pain. Formula can also open up the protective seal colostrum creates, making it possible for germs and bacteria to enter into your baby's system.

Getting a good latch is also important in order to prevent breast and nipple soreness and improve breast emptying. In order to get a good latch, follow these steps:

1. Roll your baby in so his or her tummy is facing your tummy, ensuring that their entire body is well supported with a pillow or your forearm. Remember: Tummy to Tummy.
2. Support your baby's head at the nape of their neck (with your palm between their shoulder blades) and thumb and pointer fingers just behind their ears. Be careful not to push on the back of their head.
3. Rest your nipple between your baby's nose and top lip. Once he or she opens wide, bring them to your breast, pointing your nipple to the roof of baby's mouth. Baby's chin should be touching your breast and their nose should be off of your breast.



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