

Breastfeeding:

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR PREPARING
TO BREASTFEED





Table of Contents

Preparing to Breastfeed.....	3
Why Breastfeed?	3
Why Not Breastfeed?	5
Planning for Breastfeeding.....	6
Different Stages of Breastfeeding/Milk.....	8
Eating When Breastfeeding.....	9
Pumping and Storing Breastmilk.....	10
Weaning Off Breastfeeding.....	11
Your Choice Is the Right Choice	11
Breastfeeding Supply Checklist	12
Breastfeeding Support Information and Resources	12



PREPARING TO BREASTFEED

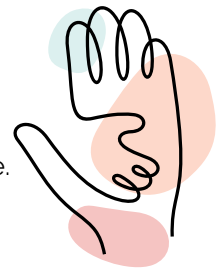
If you are expecting a new baby — congratulations! We know this is a very exciting time; we also know it is filled with a lot of new choices. One of the very first decisions you will make after your baby is born includes what to feed them. The two primary sources of food for healthy newborn babies are breastmilk and/or formula from a bottle. This guide provides detailed information on breastfeeding, including:

- Why parents choose to breastfeed
- Planning ahead for breastfeeding
- Different stages of breastfeeding
- What to eat when breastfeeding
- Pumping and storing breastmilk
- Returning to work while breastfeeding

Above all, we know that breastfeeding is not possible for everyone, and for some parents, formula is the best choice for them. This guide is meant to help expectant and new parents who are curious about breastfeeding to learn more in order to make informed decisions about what's best for their growing family.

Why Breastfeed?

Not only can breastfeeding be great for babies — it can also be great for parents, too! It provides you and your little one a chance to bond, offers various health benefits, cost savings, and a certain amount of convenience. The best part is — you have options!



Some moms find nursing as natural as breathing, but others — especially first-time parents — may find it quite challenging. That is normal. With the right information, planning, supplies, and support, you and your baby can have a strong start to a breastfeeding experience that offers many benefits well into the future.

There are many reasons why women have chosen to breastfeed throughout history and all around the world. Most women naturally produce breastmilk when a baby is born. Breastmilk from a nutritionally healthy woman contains all of the nutrients a newborn baby needs until around six months old, when many children begin trying solid food. Breastfeeding can also save a lot of money compared to exclusively feeding with store-bought formula.

Regardless of whether you decide to breastfeed only or supplement with formula, any amount of breastmilk can be very beneficial for your baby!





HEALTHIER BABY AND MOM

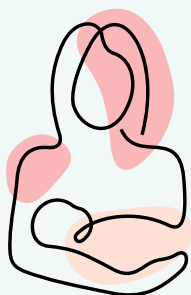
Breastfeeding is an amazing, natural source of nutrition and immune support for babies, helping to improve their health and development. It naturally includes important nutrients, antibodies, and probiotics that can help protect your baby against asthma, allergies, eczema, diabetes, ear infections, pneumonia, gastrointestinal issues, meningitis, leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and more. Nursing has even been linked to higher IQ scores.

Breastfeeding is good for mom's health, too. It promotes faster recovery from childbirth by helping the uterus return to its regular size and reducing postpartum bleeding. What's more, hormone changes during nursing help guard against diabetes, high blood pressure, and breast and ovarian cancer. This natural process may also help you maintain strong bones, offering protection against bone fractures as you age.

Some other benefits of breastfeeding include:

BONDING TIME

Nursing offers precious snuggle time that reassures your baby of your presence, promotes their social and emotional development, and forms a bond that can last a lifetime. The scent of your skin, rhythm of your heartbeat, and even taste of your milk comforts your baby and creates a feeling of closeness. Additionally, breastfeeding releases a hormone into your own system that's associated with feelings of empathy, affection, calmness, and positive communication. These emotions help you to become the warm, compassionate, and attentive parent you want to be.



FACT: Choosing not to breastfeed is your right. If you choose not to breastfeed, or are unable to breastfeed for any reason, rest assured that you're doing the best you can for you and your baby!

FREE AND CONVENIENT

Breastfeeding offers an easy way to have milk available for your baby at any time and at very little or no cost. It's not necessary to buy formula or feeding equipment to carry around. While a breast pump and bottles may be a good idea for times when you aren't available to feed your baby yourself, or when your partner, family, or friends would like to help with feeding — the cost of buying or renting a pump is likely to be a lot less than a year's supply of formula, and some insurance plans may even provide reimbursement for the cost of breast pumps.





Why Not Breastfeed?

Nursing is generally recommended and highly beneficial for both babies and moms. However, there are specific situations where breastfeeding is not advised or may not be possible for you. Babies with galactosemia, a rare metabolic disorder, should not be breastfed. Moms with HIV should refrain from nursing to prevent transmitting the infection to their child. Breastfeeding is also not advised for mothers who drink alcohol excessively or use illicit drugs. In all cases, talk to your health care provider about your individual circumstances for guidance on the best feeding options for you and your baby.



For some parents, breastfeeding may not be an option. Some women do not have enough milk-producing tissues (insufficient glandular tissue – IGT) in their breasts to produce or sustain enough milk supply to fully feed their baby. Previous breast surgeries, such as breast reductions, augmentations, or mastectomies can impact the milk ducts and nerves needed for producing breastmilk. Additionally, babies born prematurely or with other medical or physical issues may not be capable of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is also a choice. While it is generally considered the healthiest as far as nutritional content compared to formula, it is not unhealthy to feed your baby formula. Infant formula, used as a supplement to breastmilk or as your baby's only form of nutrition, is formulated to be very healthy for infants as well.



Tip

If you are unsure of whether or not you can breastfeed, talk with your health care provider about your concerns. There are various different techniques, supplies, and resources available to help you with many challenges!



Planning for Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can be very exciting and rewarding — you may also feel overwhelmed and uncertain. Having some time to learn about what to expect, what you can plan for, and how others may assist you, can go a long way in helping you feel more comfortable about getting started. Here are a few things to consider:



TIME AND SLEEP

Breastfeeding is a significant time commitment — if you plan to provide your baby with only mom's breastmilk, you are providing your only source of milk supply. Especially in the early weeks, you will feed the baby every 2-3 hours because a newborn's stomach is very small. However, this time with your baby is not wasted. You are able to slow down and spend time getting to know your baby, and the baby is benefitting from the closeness with you. Prepare for disrupted sleep and nap when the baby is sleeping. Remember, this early period does not last forever.



SUPPLIES

Planning ahead for the supplies you may need, including a breast pump, breastmilk storage supplies, items to help with breast and nipple tenderness, nursing pillows, etc., can help as you adjust and master breastfeeding. We have included a handy "Breastfeeding Checklist" in this guide for common items that may help.



BACK-UP PLANNING

While breastfeeding is natural, it's also a skill that must be learned by both mom and baby. Challenges, like the baby "latching on" to the nipple, low milk supply, and breast/nipple soreness or infections can arise. These are all normal but understandably frustrating; however, having a plan in place can help ease the stress of these challenges. Considering things like the possibility of low breastmilk supply, returning to work, or a physical or health reason why you'd need to stop breastfeeding, can help you plan what back-up option you're comfortable with. Pumping milk for an extra freezer supply, and supplementing with formula as an alternative to breastfeeding altogether, are worth considering in case they are needed. Ensuring your baby is fed is the most important goal.



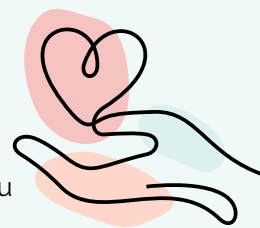


Many of your friends and family have experience with breastfeeding — you may find they have some practical and helpful tips! Be sure to check with your health care provider if you're unsure.



SUPPORT SYSTEMS

If you choose to breastfeed and find yourself having trouble in some areas — you're not alone! There are many resources for common problems available to you for support, encouragement, and solutions.



- **Your primary doctor, OBGYN, and even your baby's pediatrician** can offer support and referrals to local resources for help with breastfeeding. If you ever get a fever and severe soreness in one or both breasts, see your health care provider right away to rule out an infection.
- **The hospital maternity department** where you gave birth likely has referral information for lactation consultants, certified lactation counselors, or breastfeeding educators. These are all people who specialize in helping breastfeeding mothers learn how to successfully breastfeed and can provide a lot of great information and tips.
- **Community support programs**, like [Women, Infants & Children \(WIC\)](#) Program and [Child and Family Resource Network](#) can offer local, personal support. Just as we are providing this free guide for support, we also have caring, compassionate Family Support Specialists to help with a variety of parenting challenges, like breastfeeding. If you're preparing to welcome a newborn baby into your home, or the baby has already arrived, keep our contact information nearby and let us know when you need some extra support!

See the list of resources available nationally for helping you with additional information or support on page 12 in this guide.

HOW LONG TO BREASTFEED

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months with continued breastfeeding alongside solid foods for at least a year or longer, if possible. However, how long you breastfeed is a personal choice along with many other considerations like working, daycare, the health of mom and baby, and more. We recommend discussing your options with your family and your health care provider.

INVOLVING YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER AND FAMILY

Partners and family members can, and should, play a big role in supporting a breastfeeding mom. Partners can help by changing diapers, burping the baby after feedings, and bringing the baby to mom for nighttime nursing sessions, among other things. Emotional support is just as important; a kind word or a listening ear can go a long way to helping a mom with the physical and emotional requirements involved with breastfeeding. Other family members can pitch in to help with household chores or meal prep, giving both mom and partner more time to focus on feeding and bonding with the baby together.



Different Stages of Breastfeeding/Milk

From the moment you get pregnant, through birth, and until you stop breastfeeding, your body and breasts are preparing to meet your baby's nutritional needs. Understanding these changes, and how your breastmilk changes, can help you feel more confident throughout your breastfeeding journey.

COLOSTRUM

During the first few days after your baby's birth, your body produces colostrum, a thick, yellow milk that is packed with nutrients and antibodies (protective proteins) that are very beneficial to your baby. Because your newborn is small, with a very small stomach, colostrum is typically sufficient for the baby until your breasts fill with breastmilk. Colostrum helps protect your newborn's immune system and supports their digestive development.

FACT: Colostrum is often referred to as “Liquid Gold” in reference to its yellow color and super nutrients — it may be a small amount but it's full of healthy nutrition for your baby!

TRANSITIONAL MILK

A few days after you give birth, your colostrum transitions into breastmilk that is higher in volume and calories, which your baby will need at this point. This “transitional milk” lasts for about two weeks, and provides your growing baby with the energy and nutrients needed at this time.

MATURE MILK

By the end of the second week after giving birth, your body begins producing “mature milk”, which is breastmilk that provides your baby with a perfect combination of nutrients and fat for healthy growth and development.



GETTING STARTED AND ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

Immediately after birth, breastfeeding “on demand” (whenever your baby shows signs of hunger such as crying, sucking on their fingers or hands, and turning toward your breasts helps your body to adjust to provide the amount of milk you need to fulfill your baby. Over time, you and your baby will begin to find a rhythm and feeding routine that works for both of you.



SUPPLEMENTING WITH FORMULA OR FOOD

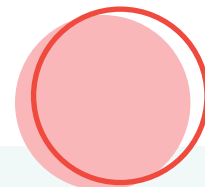
When your baby is around six months old, it may be time for them to begin eating solid foods while continuing to breastfeed through at least one year old. It's important to discuss introducing solid foods with your baby's pediatrician, because every baby is different. Some parents also choose to supplement breastfeeding with formula earlier. Again, it's important to talk with your baby's pediatrician for questions about supplementing with formula and/or food.



Eating When Breastfeeding

What you eat when breastfeeding can directly impact your baby's health and development. A balanced diet helps keep both you and your baby healthy and strong. Your body will need extra hydration and calories to produce breastmilk, so be sure to eat enough and drink extra water. You may notice that you're hungrier and thirstier than normal when breastfeeding!

FACT: A woman burns 500-700 extra calories a day while breastfeeding.



WHAT TO EAT

Focus on eating whole, healthy foods, including plenty of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats. Foods with a lot of calcium, like dairy (milk, yogurt, and cheese), almonds, and leafy greens are great for healthy bones. It is especially important to stay well-hydrated by drinking a lot of water when you're breastfeeding. Because you are burning extra calories, don't shy away from healthy snacks like nuts, yogurt, or fresh fruit.

WHAT TO AVOID

When breastfeeding, much of what a mom eats is passed through breastmilk to the baby. For this reason, limit the amount of caffeine you drink to about one or two cups of coffee a day. If you drink too much caffeine, it can affect your baby's sleep. Avoid alcohol or consume it sparingly, and wait at least two hours after having even one drink before breastfeeding. Avoid fish that contain high levels of mercury, like shark, swordfish, and tuna. Highly processed and sugary foods should be eaten in moderation.



MANAGING BABY'S FOOD INTOLERANCES

If your baby shows signs of an intolerance to things you're eating or drinking, such as gassiness, fussiness, or rash — talk to your baby's pediatrician and your doctor. Common causes of intolerance include dairy, soy, or spicy foods. With your doctor's approval, you may eliminate the suspected foods from your diet to see if it helps your baby's comfort. Keeping a food diary may help you track how your baby responds when you eat certain foods to help identify triggers.



Pumping and Storing Breastmilk

Pumping breastmilk can be valuable for nursing moms by offering flexibility and support for feeding your baby. Whether you're returning to work, sharing the experience of feeding the baby with others, or relieving the pressure of breasts that are full of milk, understanding the basics of pumping, and preparing ahead, can make the experience smoother.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PUMP

From mechanic to manual, there are many types of breast pumps available. To choose the right option for you, think about how often you may need to pump. If you'll pump frequently — maybe to have extra frozen milk available or for your partner to help feed — a double electric pump can save a lot of time and effort.



TIP: Check your insurance plan for whether or not the cost of a mechanical breast pump is covered.

SET UP A PUMPING ROUTINE

Remember that your body will produce milk based on how often and how much your baby feeds every day, so it is constantly adjusting as the baby grows. By aiming to pump around the same times your baby feeds each day, your body will continue to establish and maintain your milk supply. If you're replacing a feeding session with expressed milk or a bottle of formula, pump whenever your baby would typically nurse. For moms exclusively pumping, 8-10 sessions per day is ideal, especially early on.



PREPARING YOUR PUMPING SUPPLIES

Make sure you have breast milk storage bags or containers and a comfortable, private space to pump. Investing in a hands-free pumping bra can be helpful but is not required. Be sure to read instructions that come with your pump for proper cleaning and sanitizing techniques. You may also want extra pump parts/supplies in case you lose them or need to replace them for any reason.

STORING BREASTMILK

Fresh breastmilk — You can keep freshly pumped breastmilk at room temperature for up to four hours, in the fridge for up to four days, or in the freezer for up to 12 months.

Thawed breastmilk — After thawing frozen milk, you can store it at room temperature for up to two hours or in the fridge for up to 24 hours. Never refreeze thawed milk.

Unfinished milk — If your baby doesn't finish a bottle of breastmilk during a feeding, discard the remaining milk after two hours, otherwise it may result in bacterial growth that could cause the baby to get sick.



TIP: If you'll be away from home for more than four hours, bring a cooler and some ice packs to keep pumped breastmilk cool until you can put it in a refrigerator.



Weaning Off Breastfeeding

When to wean off (slowly stop) breastfeeding is between you and your baby. Weaning happens at different times for every family and happens by choice or for other reasons. Whether you stop breastfeeding before your baby is ready or not, it's important to approach the process with consideration, patience, and care.



EARLY WEANING

If you decide to wean off breastfeeding before your baby shows readiness, it is essential to do it gradually to avoid painfully engorged breasts (when milk continues to produce as though your baby is still feeding regularly.) Start by replacing one breastfeeding session a day with a bottle of formula or previously expressed milk. Slowly increase the number of bottle feedings over days or weeks to give your body, and your baby, time to adjust to a new routine. Offering extra cuddles and comfort during this transition can help both you and your baby maintain your special bond of breastfeeding.

BABY-LED WEANING

Some parents wait until their baby naturally becomes disinterested in breastfeeding. This can happen as solid food becomes a bigger part of their diet, usually between 6-14 months. Often, before bed or first morning feedings are the last to end for self-weaning babies.

Your Choice Is the Right Choice

Breastfeeding is a very personal decision. What matters most is that you feel comfortable and confident in your choice. Remember that it doesn't have to be all or nothing; you can do a combination of nursing, bottle feeding formula, or pumping and bottle feeding your breastmilk. There may also be options for bottle feeding breastmilk from a reputable donor bank: a service that collects, screens, stores, and distributes breastmilk from donors. (Find a reputable milk bank near you at the Human Milk Banking Association of North America.) Regardless of how you choose to nourish your baby, you deserve understanding, acceptance, and support!

**CONTACT US ANYTIME FOR
QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT BREASTFEEDING!**

Visit our website at
childandfamilyresourcenetwork.org
or call/text us at **(712) 355-2615**



Breastfeeding Supply Checklist



BREASTMILK PUMPING SUPPLIES

- ☐ Electronic breast pump
 - ☐ Rental or purchase
- ☐ Part supplies (supply bottles, hoses, etc. —see product manual for details on supplies)
- ☐ Breast pump cleaning supplies – brush for pump parts, pump specific/approved dishwashing soap, pump part sterilizers (see product manual for details on how to clean)
- ☐ Breastmilk bags/containers for storing pumped milk
- ☐ Manual breast pump (optional)
- ☐ Liners for disposable bottles
- ☐ Bottles/nipples if pumped breastmilk will be fed to baby by bottle
- ☐ Bottle warmer (to warm stored breastmilk for feeding)
- ☐ Cleaning wipes
- ☐ Burp clothes
- ☐ Nursing cover (for use in public, if desired)
- ☐ Freezer bags for traveling with breastmilk

BREASTFEEDING SUPPLIES

- ☐ Nipple shield
- ☐ Nipple creams/ointments – lanolin cream
- ☐ Warm/cool packs for breasts
- ☐ Nursing pads (disposable)
- ☐ Nursing pads (washable)
- ☐ Breastfeeding pillow or support pillow

CLOTHING

- ☐ Breastfeeding bras (ideally two or more) – one size larger than maternity bra. After about two weeks, reassess the size needed
- ☐ Breastfeeding tops (easier for nursing)
- ☐ Breastfeeding pajama tops
- ☐ Compression top(s)

Breastfeeding Support Information and Resources

RESOURCES IN SOUTHWEST IOWA

- [Child and Family Resource Network](#) - Resources and programs for pregnant women and families with children 0-5 years old.

NATIONAL/ONLINE RESOURCES

- [National Women's Health and Breastfeeding Helpline](#) - To speak with a trained breastfeeding peer counselor in English or Spanish, call 1-800-994-9662, Monday-Friday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time.
- [La Leche League International](#) - Online support groups on Facebook, WhatsApp, and other platforms where mothers can ask questions and share experiences
- [HealthyChildren.org](#) - Find a library of articles on breastfeeding from American Academy of Pediatrics experts.
- [Firstdroplets.com](#) - Informative videos and resources in both English and Spanish
- [WIC Breastfeeding Support](#) - Contact your local WIC office for resources and support for new mothers.

