



## **BREASTFEEDING PEARLS**

At this point in your pregnancy, you probably have some questions about breastfeeding and might be deciding if it is the right feeding choice for you. The more information you can get prior to delivery, the more confident you'll feel!

Your baby will be placed directly on your chest following delivery as long as his or her vital signs are stable. The nurses at the hospital will help your baby to breastfeed for the first time while on your chest. Following delivery, you can expect to feed your baby "on demand". That means watching your baby instead of the clock and breastfeeding whenever the baby appears hungry. Some babies are very sleepy for the first few days and will need to be awoken to feed if 3 hours have passed since the last feeding. Remember, breastfeeding is a learned skill for you and your baby! It is very normal to need a lot of help in the early days. The nurses in the hospital are well-trained in breastfeeding and are there to help you so don't hesitate to call them!

### **Breast care:**

Immediately following delivery, your breasts will produce colostrum. This early milk is thick and very nutrient-dense. Your milk will "come in" around 3-7 days postpartum. This is when the colostrum changes to more mature milk and results in an increase in breast size. Engorgement is very common during this time and should subside within 24-48 hours, but it can take up to 3 weeks for the supply and demand between the baby and the breast to resolve completely. Please see our "Preventing and Managing Engorgement" handout for detailed information on engorgement. We recommend having soft, supportive nursing bras on-hand to wear during the first 6 weeks of breastfeeding. It is best to wait until you are at least 36 weeks pregnant to purchase a bra since your breast size is likely to change during pregnancy. 3-4 bras are usually sufficient depending on how often you do laundry. Underwire bras should be avoided during the first 6-8 weeks of breastfeeding and caution should be taken when wearing them thereafter as they can cause clogged ducts.

Some nursing mothers are surprised that they leak a lot of milk initially when nursing and in between feedings. You may also leak milk from the breast you are not feeding off of during a feeding. Many moms also experience "let downs" from time to time: if it's close to when the baby is due to feed, when they are away from the baby and think of him/her, if they hear a baby crying, or if they are really full of milk. Nursing pads can be placed into your bra to help soak up any milk that leaks out. They are available over-the-counter and come in both reusable (washable) and disposable forms. Please be sure to replace your nursing pads once they become wet to prevent infection and skin irritation. Just remember, most moms find that leakage subsides greatly with time.

When nursing, don't take any medications unless you have asked your doctor or pharmacist if it is safe to take with breastfeeding. You can find a "Medication List When Breastfeeding" on our website.

### **Breastfeeding classes:**

If you are thinking about breastfeeding, you might want to think about attending a breastfeeding class before you deliver. This will allow you to ask more detailed questions about nursing. Contact Expectant Parent Organization for information on a breastfeeding class. All of the nurses on the mother-baby unit at Sparrow are trained in breastfeeding. Lactation consultants are also available in the hospital if you are having problems your nurse cannot help you with. Should you have a need for a private lactation consultation once you leave the hospital there are lactation consultants in the community that work on a fee-for-service basis. Fees vary depending on the provider. Check with your insurance to see if it is a covered benefit. Some pediatric practices also have lactation consultants on their staff. Another breastfeeding resource is the La Leche League which is a mother-to-mother support group that meets monthly to answer breastfeeding questions and give support to breastfeeding mothers. They have also authored a good resource text on everything you could possibly want to know about breastfeeding titled "The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding".

### **Other helpful hints:**

-Even the youngest babies tell us when they're hungry! Watch your baby for the following feeding cues and offer your breast whenever you see them, regardless of when your baby ate last. Remember, young babies eat often!

- bright-eyed and alert

- bringing hands to mouth

- sticking tongue out

- turning head towards the side if the cheek is brushed "rooting"

- crying (this is a late cue- try to feed your baby before this point)

-Proceed with caution when introducing a pacifier to your breast feeding baby. Pacifiers can hide feeding cues, leading to missed opportunities for breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is a "learned art" that develops with time and patience. It is a learning experience for both moms and babies. Keep in mind that it might take 4-6 weeks before you feel truly comfortable with nursing, and that it does get better with time. Stick with it and the rewards can be endless. Best of luck with your breastfeeding experience!

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