



## Difficulty with Breastfeeding

**Breastfeeding** seems like it should be so easy. After all, haven't moms been doing it for millennia? But even though it is natural, it's not often easy – especially early on, during the first week or so. Many times, there are difficulties of one sort or another. Sometimes the problem is that your baby doesn't latch onto your breasts well, or that the latching is fine but your baby falls asleep too soon. And sometimes your milk hasn't come in yet. Luckily, most of the time we can help you figure out how to work with these difficulties and get the feeding going well.

- The first step is to make sure that the latch of your baby's mouth on your breast is deep and comfortable. When you put your nipple into your baby's mouth, make sure that her mouth is open very wide, and your breast goes in pretty fully. Ideally her lower lip should be about ½-1 inch or so below your nipple on the breast. As your baby sucks, it should be on the areola (the flatter round part around the nipple), not on the tip of the nipple. It should feel comfortable to you. If baby is nursing well and actively, with a good latch, keep going as long as you can. Switch breasts after about 15-20 minutes on the first breast if she is still eager to nurse.
- The second step is to make sure that your baby is actually working to get her milk. This usually looks like “suck, swallow, breathe” and repeat. Sometimes your baby is just pacifying at the breast while really sleeping on the job. This looks like blissful sleep followed by jaw tremble, a couple of sucks and back to sleep while staying latched on. We want your baby to nurse for at least 15 minutes on the first breast, because the last part of the milk, the so-called “hind milk”, is rich in fat and calories. So, if your baby is sleeping on your breast, you can try to do breast massage and/or breast compressions to help keep your baby actively nursing. If the nursing session is going well, keep it up. If your baby can latch and nurse well for 10-15 minutes, at least 8 times in 24 hrs, all is well and you may stop reading right here!

Sometimes, however, neither of these maneuvers works. If this is happening, here is what we suggest. Look at the clock when you start trying to nurse. If you are having trouble with your baby's latch, or he isn't steadily sucking well, then stop nursing after 15 minutes. Give him to your support person (father, partner, grandmother, best friend) and have them give him either pumped milk or formula with a bottle or SNS system. This will satisfy him and make sure he gets proper nutrition. Meanwhile, you pump both breasts with an electric (preferably hospital-grade) pump for 15 minutes so you will make enough milk. But don't be discouraged if you don't get milk. The aim is to stimulate your breasts to produce milk, which can take a day or two – or even more. The idea is to get your milk production up, and this procedure usually works.

After you have done this, you will have about an hour and a half until the next cycle begins again. This is a good time to rest and, if you can, enjoy yourself! We know this is hard work, and you deserve the time off. Also, your body needs the time to rest in order to make enough milk, so try to minimize your household tasks to accomplish, if possible. Then, about 2 hours from the start of the last feeding, the cycle can start again. If your baby isn't interested in feeding (especially if he just

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had a lot of supplemental pumped milk or formula two hours before), try for about 15 minutes, then pump as above.

The cycle might look something like this:

- 8:00–8:15 a.m.— trying to breastfeed but having difficulty latching, or baby not seeming to be satisfied – and still awake and fussy;
- 8:15–8:30 a.m.— baby is fed pumped milk or formula while mother pumps both breasts;
- 8:30–10 a.m.— mother rests and relaxes if possible; then
- 10 a.m. — try to nurse, repeat cycle.

Eventually, we can let your baby get into her own rhythm of feeding, and as long as she gets at least 8 feedings in 24 hours, that's fine. But early on, especially if there are problems with weight gain, it's good to try to feed every 2 hours – this means 2 hours from the beginning of one feeding to the beginning of the next feeding. Remember that this can be a tough time – hormones surge, making you feel tearful. It is do-able, and we are here to help you. If you are having these problems, we want to see you frequently in the office to check up on both of you. Things will get much better soon – hang in there!