



# Breastfeeding for the Health and Future of Our Nation

A BOOKLET FOR INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

*best start  
meilleur départ*

by/par health **nexus** santé



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*"All the rivers of the earth  
are milk that comes from  
the breast of the Great  
Mother. Our breasts give  
the waters of life to feed  
the children."*

*(ChoQosh Auh'Ho'oh, Elder)*



## Introduction

This booklet was developed to support Indigenous women who are thinking about breastfeeding or who are currently breastfeeding. You can share this booklet with the people who are supporting you.

This booklet will help you reclaim your tradition of breastfeeding. It provides:

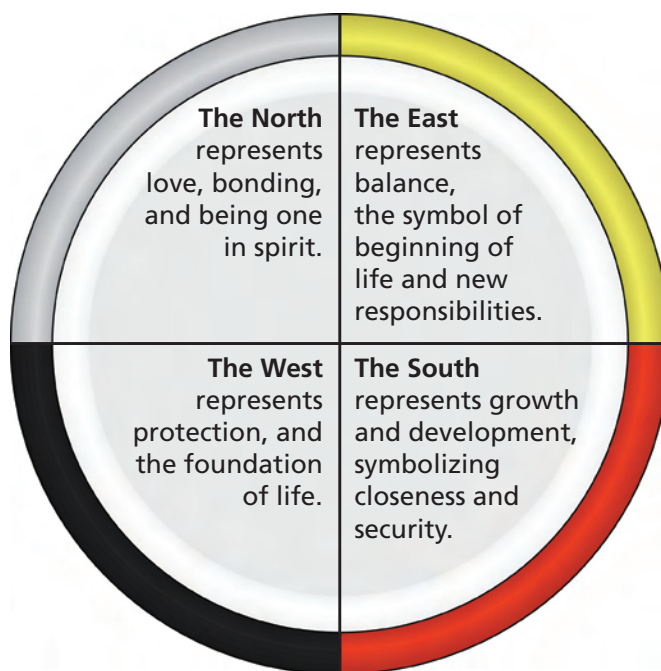
- Indigenous traditions around breastfeeding.
- How the teachings of the Medicine Wheel support the teachings about breastfeeding.
- Information about why breastfeeding is important.
- Practical tips on how to get started and continue to breastfeed.
- Answers to common questions about breastfeeding.
- Information and resources you may find helpful.

In this booklet, we have sometimes used he, and sometimes she, when referring to your baby.

If you have a premature baby, twins, or other special situations, you may need additional help and information. You can find a list of reliable resources and websites at the end of this booklet.

## Breastfeeding and the Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel is used to symbolize the balance needed to support breastfeeding women. This booklet focuses on the 4 directions of the Medicine Wheel as they relate to breastfeeding. Each direction represents a section in the booklet.





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## ***Breastfeeding: Reclaiming Our Tradition***

Conception, pregnancy, and birth are part of the circle of life. Pregnancy brought love, respect, hope, and celebration. Pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, infants, and toddlers were honoured, cherished, and nurtured by family and community.

The protection of infants was the core of traditional infant care through close and constant contact with mother and breastfeeding. Breastfeeding was thought to nourish, protect, guide, comfort, and ensure a strong bond between infant and mother. These all contributed to living a good life, just as the umbilical cord had done before birth.

*“Living a Good Life means promoting good health through life’s journey. Traditional Healers, Elders, Medicine People, and Ceremonies including stories, songs, dancing, and prayer guide our healing, balance, growth, and wisdom.”  
(ENAADAMGED KWE - Woman’s Helper)*



## Breastfeeding Traditions

*"In First Nations communities, traditionally women were respected as beings who were closest to the Creator because women created life. I believe that women were revered for both creating and sustaining life through breastfeeding. In fact, if a woman could not provide breast milk, other women would provide theirs."*  
(Community Member)



Traditionally, newborns were breastfed for at least 2 years and often for 4 or 5 years. Nursing both a newborn and a toddler was also common.

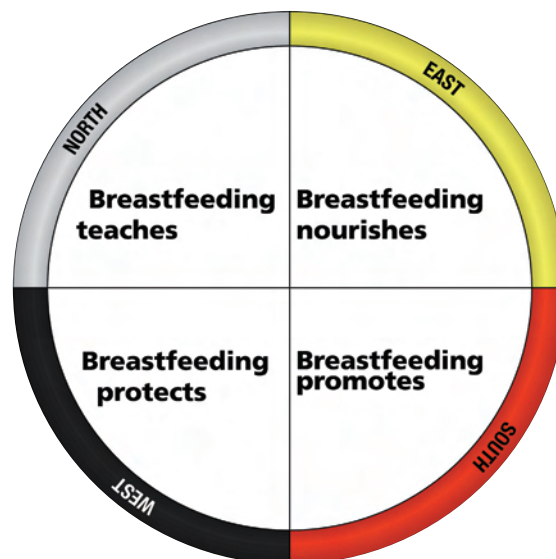
Babies were breastfed as women went about their lives, held in arms, while in a cradle board, or standing.

Community members brought breastfeeding mothers the best food - thick soups and venison. A porridge of fish or meat broth, cornmeal, wild rice, and raspberry roots helped the breast milk flow (increased milk production). Some nations believed chokeberries, potatoes and bread dried up breast milk.

## Breastfeeding is Important

Breastfeeding rates began to decline worldwide in the 1920s when evaporated cow's milk and infant formula became widely accessible.

Indigenous women today understand that it is crucial to the health and future generations to reclaim the tradition of breastfeeding.





## ***Breastfeeding nourishes - East***

As your baby grows, your breast milk changes to provide exactly what your baby needs for healthy growth and development.

## ***Breastfeeding promotes - South***

Breastfeeding is important to:

- Your health.
- The health and development of your baby.
- Bonding with your baby.

## ***Breastfeeding protects - West***

### **You**

Mothers who do not breastfeed are more likely to have:

- Heavy bleeding after their baby is born.
- Breast and ovarian cancer.
- Type 2 diabetes.

### **Your Baby**

Babies who are not breastfed are more likely to have:

- Ear infections, lung, and breathing issues.
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Health risks later in life such as overweight, obesity, and chronic illnesses like diabetes.

### **Future Generations**

Breastfeeding has a long-lasting effect:

- By breastfeeding your baby you are thinking of the next 7 generations. You are promoting good health and development and future breastfeeding.
- By breastfeeding your baby you are protecting the environment because there is:
  - o No packaging or waste.
  - o No transportation costs.

### **In Emergencies**

Breastfeeding protects even in an emergency. Even if your drinking water is not safe, your baby can breastfeed.

## ***Breastfeeding teaches - North***

Breastfeeding teaches you about your baby and about your role as a mother.





## ***Your Baby's Birth and First Few Days***

The birth of your baby is the beginning of life. Life is linked to the colour yellow, the colour of a new day.

The feather stands for balance. A new baby brings new responsibilities for a mother and her family. When you take care of yourself you have more energy to care for your baby.

*"When my son was born my Métis father was not able to come to the birth. He told me that he would pray that my son would grow up to be a strong man and that I could be a strong mother. My father later told me that he had gone to his trapping ground and boiled himself some tea and that's where he prayed to give thanks to mother earth and asked for strength for his new grandson. My son has grown up to be a strong man." (Métis mother)*



## How can I help my baby have a good start?

Before your baby's birth, your body provided everything your baby needed for growth, warmth, and protection. You continue this important job after birth as well.

Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs until the age of 6 months. Breastfeeding helps your baby grow up as healthy as possible. Your baby knows how to breastfeed. You just need to help him a little.

After your baby is born he will be gently placed on your chest, skin-to-skin. Your baby will be wiped dry and a blanket will keep you both warm. If you leave your baby in this position, she will begin looking for your breast. This usually happens within an hour from birth. Your baby is born with the instinct to breastfeed. She will lift her head, lick her hands and bob towards your breast. She may need a little help from you or she may latch on all by herself.

Even if your baby isn't ready to breastfeed right away, it is good for him to stay skin-to-skin without interruption for at least 1 to 2 hours, or until he is ready to feed.

## What is skin-to-skin holding?

Skin-to-skin is a way of holding your baby that babies and parents enjoy. Your baby wears only a diaper and is held upright on your bare chest. A light blanket can be draped across your baby's back. When you hold your baby skin-to-skin, he can hear your heartbeat and breathing, and smell and feel your skin. This comforts your baby.

### Being skin-to-skin will help your baby:

- Be calm.
- Breathe better.
- Have normal blood sugar.
- Stay warm.

Holding your baby skin-to-skin helps you get to know your baby and bond with your baby. Premature babies benefit from this, too. Older babies also enjoy skin-to-skin holding. Your partner, or another person you are close to, can hold your baby skin-to-skin as well, to comfort and nurture your baby.





## What is laid-back breastfeeding?

To encourage him to breastfeed, you can try this approach (often called laid-back breastfeeding):

- Lie on your back with pillows to raise your head and shoulders and get comfortable.
- While skin-to-skin, put your baby tummy down on your chest.
- Support his bottom and shoulders with your hands.



When he is ready, he will start looking for your breast. He will lift up his head, push with his legs and use his hands to help him find the nipple. At first, he might just lick the nipple or might bob his head up and down over the breast. After a while he will find the nipple and latch on. When he is touching your nipple, you might feel contractions again in your belly, just like when you were in labour. This is normal.

If your nipple feels sore as your baby sucks or you are not comfortable, you can move your baby a little until it feels better. You want him to have as much of the breast as possible in his mouth, not just the nipple. Ask your nurse or other support person to help you.

## How do I know when my baby is hungry?

As you get to know your baby, you will learn what she does to tell you she is hungry. Every baby is a little different! Here are some things she may be doing:

- Moving her lips as if she is sucking.
- Putting her hands up to her mouth or face.
- Sucking her fists or fingers.
- Turning her head from side to side while opening her mouth.
- Trying to move towards your breast.

Always try to breastfeed when you see these early signs. If you miss the early cues and your baby is crying, you will need to calm her before she is able to breastfeed. Babies who have been crying a lot can be harder to feed.

**To help your baby latch and feed easily, you can try these tips:**

- Watch for the early signs that your baby is ready to breastfeed (putting her hands up to her mouth, for example). Breastfeed before she starts to cry.
- Hold her upright with her tummy against your chest. Pat her back and talk to her until she calms down. Then try breastfeeding again.
- Switch to a different breastfeeding position.
- See if she will latch on by herself in the laid-back position.
- Let your baby suck on your clean finger for a minute to help her calm down. Then try breastfeeding again.
- Express some milk on your nipple so your baby will smell and taste it right away.
- Give her some expressed breast milk by cup or spoon and then try her at the breast.



## How can I express milk by hand?

Many mothers find these steps work to hand-express milk:

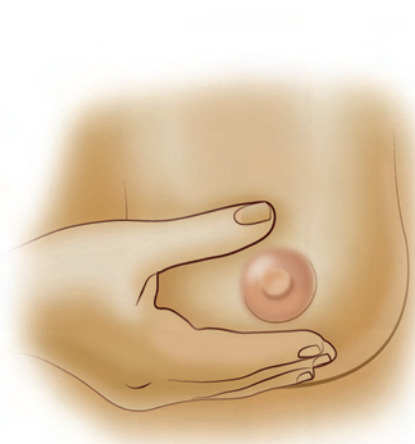
- Wash your hands.
- Rub your breasts from the top to the nipple. Roll the nipple between your fingers.
- Hold one breast with your hand, not too close to the nipple. Put your thumb on top and your fingers on the bottom.
- Press your thumb and fingers together and at the same time, push back towards your chest.
- Relax your thumb and fingers and then do it again. It can take a little time for the milk to start flowing. Are you seeing some drops of milk? Great! You can use a spoon or a small, clean container to catch the milk.
- When no more milk is coming out, move your fingers and thumb a little bit and repeat.

You can feed your baby the milk you get using a spoon or a cup. Even if your baby is not able to feed yet, expressing your milk means you will make more. The milk can be stored in the fridge or frozen for you to use when your baby is ready. Refer to Expressing and Storing Breastmilk fact sheet for more information at

[www.beststart.org/resources/breastfeeding/Expressing\\_Fact%20Sheets\\_Eng\\_rev2.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/breastfeeding/Expressing_Fact%20Sheets_Eng_rev2.pdf)

Are there other ways to give my milk to my baby?

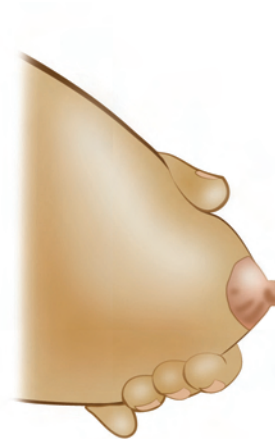
- Yes. If you are not available or your baby is unable to breastfeed you can give your milk to your baby with a spoon or small cup.
- In the first 2 or 3 days, hand expressing usually gives more milk than using a pump.
- Get advice from a breastfeeding expert about other ways to give your baby your milk.
- Remember, breastfeeding is the best way for early milk (colostrum) to be removed from your breast and for your milk production to be stimulated.



**PRESS**



**COMPRESS**



**RELAX**



## ***Providing for Your Baby***

The Southern direction is often seen as an area of growth and development. Your baby is growing and developing while you breastfeed, and you are creating a strong bond. It is important to have skin-to-skin contact often. Your partner can enjoy skin-to-skin contact, too. Traditionally, growth and development have been seen as red or the heat of the day.

As you nurture your baby with your breast milk, you see her grow and develop. Appreciate the beauty and wonder of your body's ability to create and nurture life. Care for your body by:

- Eating healthy and traditional food.
- Staying relaxed.
- Drinking when you are thirsty.
- Sleeping or resting when your baby sleeps.
- Being physically active when you can.
- Surrounding yourself with positive images, energy, and people.

*"Learning the wonders of your body, and living in tune with its rhythms and the rhythms of your baby's body, you will naturally develop a greater sense of body-trust, which is one factor that builds your self-confidence." (Ryan & Auletta, 2005)*



## How do I hold my baby while breastfeeding?

The laid-back position helps a newborn baby breastfeed. It can also be used anytime you and your baby like (see page 9 for details). There are also other positions you can use.

### For any position:

- **Tummy against tummy:** When your baby's tummy is against your tummy, he can latch on to your nipple more easily. When you hold your baby so that his nose is level with your nipple, he can tip his head back as he latches on. That way he will get a lot of your breast and nipple in his mouth.
- **Latch:** When he latches well, his chin will be pressed into your breast, his head will be tipped back, and his nose will be away from your breast. You want him to have your nipple and part of your breast in his mouth.
- **Use of pillows:** They can support you in a comfortable position, or protect your incision if you had a caesarean section. You do not need a special breastfeeding pillow, but some mothers like them.
- **Placement of your hand:** If your hand is behind his head, he may push back against your hand and not latch on. It is easier to help him latch if your hand is behind his shoulders and supporting his neck.
- **Wait for a wide-open mouth:** Make sure your baby's chin is touching your breast. Watch for your baby to open his mouth wide for the nipple, and then gently press his shoulders so he gets closer to you. That way the nipple and the area around it goes deep into his mouth.
- **Supporting your breast:** By supporting your breast you can help a young baby get a deep latch. Keep your fingers and thumb back from the nipple so they will not get in the way of your baby's mouth.



*Mother breastfeeding using the cradle hold position.*

Any position that is comfortable for you and your baby is fine. A good position allows a good latch.

## Lying Down

When you are tired (and all new mothers are tired) it helps to be able to breastfeed lying down.

- Lie on your side, with a pillow under your head. Some mothers like a pillow behind their backs or one between their knees, too.
- Let the pillow support the weight of your head.
- Have your baby on her side and facing you.
- Pull her close so that her nose is level with your nipple and her chin presses against your breast. When she tips her head back and opens her mouth wide, bring her in closer to help her latch on.



### The football hold

*(when breastfeeding from the left breast)*

- Put a pillow behind your back.
- Hold your baby beside you with her body between your left elbow and your side, so that her legs and feet are towards your back.
- Your left hand will be behind her shoulders and neck
- You can support your breast with your right hand.

### The cross-cradle position

*(when breastfeeding from the left breast)*

- Hold your baby with your right arm.
- Put your right hand behind her shoulder and neck.
- You can support your breast with your left hand.



### The cradle position

*(when breastfeeding from the left breast)*

- Hold your baby in your left arm, with her head near your elbow. Your hand holds her bottom.
- You can support your breast with your right hand if you need to, or use your right hand to help support your baby's weight.



## How often will my baby feed?

Breastfeeding babies need to eat often. Newborns will need to feed 8 or more times a day. Some feed more than 12 times a day. That is normal.

Sometimes mothers expect babies to eat on a schedule, but it is important to feed your baby whenever she is hungry. Frequent feedings don't mean that you don't have enough milk, or that your milk is not good enough. Some babies will have 3 or 4 feedings close together and then rest for a longer time. This is normal, too. Babies often have the close-together feedings in the evening.

As your baby grows, she will have days when she feeds more often than usual. This is how she tells your body to make more milk for her. Usually she will feed less often after 1 or 2 days.

Sometimes mothers try to get their baby to go longer between feedings by using a soother or pacifier. This can be a problem because your baby might not get enough to eat, and your breasts will start making less milk. Some babies have problems breastfeeding and can even refuse the breast if they use a pacifier or bottle nipple. Many babies never use a pacifier. Talk to your health care provider if you are thinking of giving your baby a pacifier.



## Why does my baby spit up milk sometimes?

Some babies spit up once in a while, and some babies spit up after every feeding. This is normal. Usually it is just because the baby took a bit too much milk.

















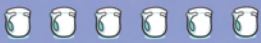






*"Women are the first environment. We are privileged to be the doorway to life. At the breast of women, the generations are nourished and sustained. From the bodies of women flow the relationships of those generations both to society and to the natural world. In this way is the earth our mother, the old people said. In this way, we as women are earth." (Katsi Cook, Mohawk, 2003)*

## How do I know if my baby is getting enough milk?

Most babies will lose weight in the first few days, but after that they should start gaining. Your midwife, your community health centre, your local public health unit, or your doctor will weigh your baby to check.

### At home you can watch for these things:

- Your baby is feeding at least 8 times in 24 hours. It is okay if your baby breastfeeds more often. His tummy is small so he needs to keep refilling it.
- Your baby changes from fast sucks at the beginning of the feeding to slow sucks. You may be able to hear or see your baby swallowing. He may change to fast sucks again later in the feeding. That is okay.
- After he is 4 days old, your baby has at least 3 or 4 poopy diapers every 24 hours. The poop is yellow in colour and like thick soup. After 6 or 8 weeks, he may not poop as often. That is normal.
- Your breasts may feel softer after your baby feeds.

GUIDELINES FOR NURSING MOTHERS									
Your Baby's Age	1 WEEK							2 WEEKS	3 WEEKS
	1 DAY	2 DAYS	3 DAYS	4 DAYS	5 DAYS	6 DAYS	7 DAYS		
<b>How Often Should You Breastfeed?</b> Per day, on average over 24 hours	       								
	At least 8 feeds per day. Your baby is sucking strongly, slowly, steadily and swallowing often.								
<b>Your Baby's Tummy Size</b>	 Size of a cherry		 Size of a walnut		 Size of an apricot		 Size of an egg		
<b>Wet Diapers: How Many, How Wet</b> Per day, on average over 24 hours	 At least 1 WET	 At least 2 WET	 At least 3 WET	 At least 4 WET	 At least 6 HEAVY WET WITH PALE YELLOW OR CLEAR URINE				
<b>Soiled Diapers: Number and Colour of Stools</b> Per day, on average over 24 hours	  At least 1 to 2 BLACK OR DARK GREEN		   At least 3 BROWN, GREEN, OR YELLOW		 At least 3 large, soft and seedy YELLOW				
<b>Your Baby's Weight</b>	Most babies lose a bit of weight in the first 3 days after birth.			From day 4 onward, most babies gain weight regularly.					
<b>Other Signs</b>	Your baby should have a strong cry, move actively and wake easily. Your breasts feel softer and less full after breastfeeding.								
<b>Breast milk is all the food a baby needs for the first six months.</b> You can get advice, help and support from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Your health care provider.</li><li>– Telehealth Ontario's specialized breastfeeding services support line at 1-866-797-0000 or TTY at 1-866-797-0007.</li><li>– Bilingual Online Ontario Breastfeeding Services directory at <a href="http://www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca">www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca</a>.</li></ul>									





## ***Protection and Support for You and Your Baby***

The Western direction is symbolized by protection and moving along life's journey in a good way. The best way to protect your new baby is to take care of yourself and breastfeed your baby. Breastfeeding helps you and your baby stay healthy and also helps you connect with your baby.

*"I plan on nursing her as long as I can because I love it and love that I can produce something that helps keep her from getting sick and she has never been sick."*

*Julie Francis, Mohawk*

Parenting requires self-discipline, self-care, and self-love. Through the gift of honouring yourself, you give to your child. You are your child's first teacher, greatest role model, and life giver, nurturer, and sustainer. You matter and everything you do for and with your child matters.

*"Nengaaigchigewin means gentle parenting, extended nursing, strong attachments, immediate response to a child's need. This is based on the fundamental belief that children will only ask for things as long as they need them e.g. extended nursing, communal sleeping areas, kept close in a Tikanagan, baby wearing." Clare Brant, P. Patterson, "Native Child Rearing Practices and Their Role in Mental Health", A Collection of Chapters, Lecture, Workshops and Thoughts, 1997.*

## Your Family and Community

Your partner, family, and your community are there to protect you, too. Even before your baby is born, tell your family and friends that you plan to breastfeed and ask them to support you.

Find out what they know and believe. Breastfeeding is a way to learn about your family's history and beliefs, which can be very healing. Breastfeeding offers a way to reconnect with original teachings.

Babies are born to breastfeed. During the early days after birth, some babies and mothers need time to learn and get it right. Your family and friends can help you give your baby the best start in life. Your mother, grandmother, aunties, and Elders may not have breastfed their babies. This is a chance for you to learn together. Once your baby is born, let them take care of you, so you can take care of your baby.



*"The idea that children are the glue that holds our families and communities together was a teaching Edna Manitowabi shared with me." Leanne Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back" 2011*

## Mother-to-Mother Support

Mothers also benefit from the support of other mothers who are breastfeeding. You may have friends or relatives who are breastfeeding their babies or have recently breastfed. You can also meet other breastfeeding mothers through:

- Prenatal classes.
- Parenting groups.
- Breastfeeding support network.
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs.

*"Community members always went out to greet mothers when there was a new baby, to offer support and show caring." (Assembly of First Nations Wisdom and Vision. Referenced in Health Canada, 2003)*



## Partners, Family, or Community Members

Partners, family, and community members can support breastfeeding in many ways, such as:

- 1. Learn more.** Get as much information about breastfeeding as you can before the baby is born. Talk to friends, relatives, other breastfeeding families, and health care providers to find out how to support breastfeeding. Read this booklet to learn more about breastfeeding.
- 2. Know where you can get support.** Learn about the services in your community and help the mother access them.
- 3. Encourage the mother.** A new mother may worry that she does not have enough milk for her baby. Most women have more than enough breastmilk. Tell her that breastfeeding is the best way to feed her baby. Tell her that you believe in her. Tell her that you are there to help.
- 4. Do not disturb.** Help the mother limit visitors and telephone calls in the first few weeks after the baby is born. This will help the mother and baby can get to know each other and learn how to breastfeed.
- 5. Encourage rest.** New mothers need to rest so they can recover from the birth and care for their baby. Help with everyday tasks such as making meals, washing dishes and laundry, keeping the home tidy, and caring for other children.
- 6. Help the mother care for her baby.** Babies cry for many reasons - not just for hunger. Learn different ways of comforting the baby such as walking, singing, or dancing. By comforting, bathing, or changing the baby you can give the mother more time to breastfeed and take care of herself.
- 7. Be realistic.** A new baby changes life forever. It is normal to have mixed feelings about these changes. Giving up breastfeeding will not end these feelings. Breastfeeding will help both the mother and baby.
- 8. Get help.** If the mother feels that things are not going well with breastfeeding, make sure she gets help.
- 9. Remember that each mother is different.** Ask her what she feels would help her.



## Postpartum Mood Disorders

Postpartum mood disorders affect 1 in 5 mothers and 1 in 10 fathers. They can happen to anyone.

**If you have a postpartum mood disorder, you may:**

- Have little or no interest or enjoyment in things you used to enjoy.
- Feel sad most of the time.
- Feel nervous, anxious, or on edge.
- Not be able to stop or control worrying.
- Feel really tired.
- Feel irritable, frustrated, restless, or angry.
- Feel worthless or hopeless.
- Feel guilty or ashamed.
- Feel numb, empty, or alone.



If you have any of these feelings for more than 2 weeks, get help.

**If you have thoughts about harming yourself or your baby, get help right away.**

**Feeling like this is not your fault. Don't wait. There is help for you and your family**

Here are some people and places you can get help from:

- Your health care provider
- Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000 or TTY 1-866-797-0007
- Mental Health Services Information Ontario: 1-866-531-2600





## Learning with Your Baby

Breastfeeding connects you with your baby in a way that can be described as one in spirit. Your body and your baby's body become connected through touch, breath, and heartbeat. Slow down and enjoy the moments. This teaches patience as you give your baby your full attention, comfort, and warmth.

The Northern direction is often associated with wisdom and love. You are gaining knowledge every day learning about your body, learning about how to be a good parent, and learning about your baby. According to traditional teachings, your baby is still connected to the spirit world and has great wisdom. It is up to you to learn from your baby and to protect her spirit.

*It is said that your baby chose you as her parent because she saw something special in you.*

## Caring for Your New Baby

There are many things to learn when you have a new baby. During the first few weeks there seems to be a new change almost every day. As you meet your baby's needs you will begin to trust yourself. In no time you will become more confident as you learn with your baby.



## How can I breastfeed a sleepy baby?

Most babies will wake up when they are hungry. But sometimes a newborn baby can be too sleepy. If your baby is sleeping for more than 3 hours in the first 1 or 2 weeks, you might need to wake her up to feed. If you cannot wake your baby for a feeding, you need to get medical attention.

### Here are some ideas you might try:

- Undress her. Take off your top so she can lie against your chest with her skin against your skin.
- Watch for signs that she is hungry. If she puts her hands to her mouth or moves her head from side to side, she might be ready to feed.
- Change her diaper.
- Rub her back and legs.
- Talk to her.
- Express some of your milk on your nipple, so she can smell it.

## What if my nipples are sore?

The most common reason for sore nipples is that the baby is not latched on well. If your baby does not get enough of your breast in his mouth, your nipples may hurt.

### How can you tell if your baby is not latched well?

- When your nipple comes out of your baby's mouth, it looks flat on one side.
- You see cracks, blisters, or bleeding on your nipples.

### You can help your baby get more of your breast into his mouth by:

- Gently pressing your baby's shoulders to move him closer to you as he latches on.
- Trying a different position for breastfeeding.
- Leaning back so your baby is more on top of you.
- Tilting his head back a little bit by shifting your position or by tucking his bottom in closer to you.

If your nipples are not getting better after 1 or 2 days, you may need more help. There might be another cause. A breastfeeding expert will help you figure out what is wrong and what to do.



## Why are my breasts so full?

Between 2 and 4 days after your baby is born, you will start making a lot more milk. Your breasts might feel hard and sore. Your breasts might be so full that it is hard for your baby to latch on.

### It will help if you:

- Feed your baby as often as she is willing to eat.
- Use both breasts at each feeding.
- Make sure your baby is latched on well. This helps her get more milk.

If your baby still can't latch on, you might want to express some milk. Your baby can get this milk from a spoon or a cup. Then try to breastfeed again, before your breasts become too firm.



If your breasts get so full that your baby can't latch on, you can try to:

- Express some milk before you feed your baby. This should make the area around the nipple softer.
- Put an ice pack (wrapped in a cloth) or a cold washcloth on your breasts between feedings.
- Place a warm cloth on your breast just before feeding to help the milk flow.
- Contact a breastfeeding expert if you continue to have trouble latching your baby.

It can take a day or 2 or up to a week for this very full feeling to go away. That's normal. You will still have plenty of milk for your baby when your breasts feel softer.

## How do I calm my baby when he is crying a lot?

All babies cry. Some babies cry more than others. It can be hard if you are the mother of a baby who cries a lot. Ask for help if you feel very upset or frustrated.

**Every baby is different, but here are some things that might help:**

- Undress him and put him against your bare skin.
- Try feeding him again even if he only fed a short time ago.
- Try to respond to your baby quickly if he starts to cry. It is harder to calm a baby if he has been crying for a while.
- Hold your baby against your chest or your shoulder and walk around with him, or rock in a rocking chair.
- Try burping him.
- Talk or sing to him.
- Change his diapers if they are wet or poopy.
- Use a baby carrier or wrap while you go for a walk.





*Can I breastfeed in public places?*

*If I have small breasts. Will I be able to make enough milk?*

*If I smoke, should I breastfeed?*

*What if I need to increase my milk supply?*

*If I have HIV, can I breastfeed?*

*Why do I feel a lump in my breast?*

*I like to drink alcohol at times. Should I breastfeed?*

*I do not always eat well. Can I still breastfeed?*

## Frequently Asked Questions

As you continue to breastfeed your baby, you may have some questions. You will find common questions and answers in next few pages.

*"Traditionally, breastfeeding lasted for a long time relative to general Canadian practices. An Inuit child would usually be weaned when the mother became pregnant with her next child. This was 3 years on average but it was not uncommon to have children as old as 5 still breastfeeding if there were no younger siblings to displace them." (The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture, 2006)*

### *If I have small breasts. Will I be able to make enough milk?*

It does not matter what size your breasts are. Small breasts can make plenty of milk!

### *What if I need to increase my milk supply?*

- Most mothers can make enough milk for their babies – even if they have twins or triplets.
- Some mothers are actually making enough milk, but the baby is having a hard time getting it. The mother might have to help the baby get a better latch or breastfeed more often. The baby may have a problem that makes it hard for him to get the milk.
- The easiest way to increase your milk supply is to feed, hand express, and/or pump more often.
- Very few mothers do not make enough milk to satisfy their babies. They can still breastfeed, but they might need to give their babies extra milk as well.
- Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns.



### *I do not always eat well. Can I still breastfeed?*

Go ahead and eat your favourite healthy foods including traditional foods.

For your own health, follow Canada's Food Guide, available at:  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)

For more information on healthy eating during pregnancy, see:  
[http://en.beststart.org/for\\_parents/are-you-or-your-partner-pregnant](http://en.beststart.org/for_parents/are-you-or-your-partner-pregnant)

If you have more questions about your nutrition, contact Eat Right Ontario at: [www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca) or call 1-877-510-510-2.





### *If I have HIV, can I breastfeed?*

There is a risk that a woman infected with HIV can pass the virus on to her baby through breastfeeding. If you are HIV positive talk to a health care provider about reducing the risk of infecting your child. Health Canada recommends that women who are HIV positive feed their babies formula.

### *Why do I feel a lump in my breast?*

If you feel a lump that hurts in your breast, it could be a blocked duct. This can be anywhere on your breast. Some things you could try to get rid of the block:

- You can gently rub the breast with your fingers or thumb where the lump is. If you do it while your baby is breastfeeding, that may help even more. You can also use the back of an electric toothbrush, if you have one.
- Place a warm cloth or heating pad on your breast where the lump is can help. After applying heat, breastfeed your baby or hand express and/or pump to remove milk from your breast.
- You may also find it helps to feed your baby in a different position. It can help to breastfeed with your baby's chin close to the lump.
- Sometimes mothers have a red area on the skin near the lump and they feel sick with a fever. This might be an infection. Contact your health care provider who might suggest you take medicine. The medicine will not hurt your baby. Your milk is still good for your baby, and you will heal faster if you keep breastfeeding.

To learn more, see the Blocked Ducts fact sheet at [www.beststart.org/resources/breastfeeding/Ducts\\_Fact%20Sheets\\_Eng\\_rev2.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/breastfeeding/Ducts_Fact%20Sheets_Eng_rev2.pdf)

### *Can I breastfeed in public places?*

You can breastfeed anywhere. You don't have to use a cover-up or a blanket if you don't want to. Nobody should tell you to go to the bathroom or another place to breastfeed.

Some mothers do feel shy about breastfeeding in public. These ideas might make it easier:

- Wear a jacket or sweater over a loose top. You can pull the top up to breastfeed and the jacket will help cover you and your baby.
- If you have a shirt that buttons up the front, you can unbutton it from the bottom. That will keep you more covered.



## *How can I get enough sleep?*

Expect to sleep 2 to 4 hours at a time in the first few weeks.

- If you find it helpful, sleep or rest when your baby sleeps during the day.
- Allow yourself to extend your usual nighttime sleep. For example, in the evening after feeding your baby, if he falls asleep at 8pm and you feel like you could fall asleep, go to bed even though it seems early. Also, if your baby goes back to sleep after the morning feeding, and you feel like you could sleep more, go back to sleep for a while.
- Keep your baby close to you at night so that you can respond as soon as he starts to wake up and you don't have to go to another room to get him. Place the crib, cradle or bassinet next to your bed for at least the first 6 months of life.
- It is okay to breastfeed a full term baby where you sleep. This can make breastfeeding easier and help you respond faster to your baby's cues for feeding and comfort. When you are ready to go to sleep, return your baby to his crib, cradle, or bassinet. It is the safest place for your baby to sleep.
- If you keep diapers and wipes by your bed, you can change him (if needed) without going anywhere.
- Consider asking your partner or family member to watch your baby so you can nap. They can bring your baby to you to breastfeed. Afterwards, they could take him for a diaper change or burping while you go back to sleep.



To learn more, see:

[www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy\\_chld\\_dev/pdf/BSRC\\_Sleep\\_Well\\_resource\\_FNL\\_LR.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/pdf/BSRC_Sleep_Well_resource_FNL_LR.pdf)

## *Should I give my baby any vitamins?*

All babies need vitamin D. Breastfed babies can have Vitamin D in drops that you can get at your pharmacy. Give your baby Vitamin D drops from birth until he is 1 year old.



### ***I like to drink alcohol at times. Should I breastfeed?***

If you choose to have an occasional alcoholic drink while breastfeeding, it is important to plan ahead and breastfeed just prior to drinking alcohol. Many mothers choose an alcohol-free drink instead. This is the safest choice.

To learn more, see:

[http://www.beststart.org/resources/alc\\_reduction/breastfeed\\_and\\_alcohol\\_bro\\_A21E.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/alc_reduction/breastfeed_and_alcohol_bro_A21E.pdf)

### ***Is it safe to breastfeed while I am on methadone?***

Yes, it is safe to breastfeed your baby while taking methadone. Talk to your health care provider about the amount you are taking. If your baby is sleeping more, has difficulty breathing, or seems limp or lethargic, take your baby to a health care provider right away.

### ***Is it safe to take medication while I am breastfeeding?***

Most medications are safe when you are breastfeeding, but always check with a health care provider or a pharmacist. They can answer your questions about the safety of prescribed medications, over the counter products, and herbs.

Speak to your health care provider about breastfeeding if you use street drugs. Street drugs can harm you and your baby.

### ***How long should I breastfeed?***

You can breastfeed as long as you and your baby want to. You do not need to stop unless you want to. There is no age when a baby is too old.

Health experts recommend just breastfeeding for 6 months and then continuing with breastfeeding and adding other foods for at least 2 years. This will help your baby stay healthy and develop normally.

At 6 months, your baby can start on solid foods as well as breastfeeding.



### ***If I smoke, should I breastfeed?***

Even if you smoke, breastfeeding is still the healthiest choice for your baby. To decrease the risk to your baby, breastfeed before you smoke. Smoke outdoors while your baby is left inside with family or friends. If you have smoked, wash your hands and change your outer clothing before holding your baby. Ask people not to smoke around you and your baby.

For help with making your home smoke free, go to:  
[www.beststart.org/resources/tobacco/index.html](http://www.beststart.org/resources/tobacco/index.html).

If you would like to quit smoking, call the smoker's helpline at 1-877-513-5333 or visit  
[www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca).



### ***What if I'm going back to school or work?***

When you go back to school or work, you can still feed your baby breast milk. Check out the Expressing, Storing, and Feeding Your Baby Breastmilk at [http://en.beststart.org/for\\_parents/do-you-have-baby-0-12-months](http://en.beststart.org/for_parents/do-you-have-baby-0-12-months). You can also check out the brochure Returning to Work After Baby at [http://en.beststart.org/for\\_parents/do-you-have-young-child-or-children-1-6-years](http://en.beststart.org/for_parents/do-you-have-young-child-or-children-1-6-years).



## **When to Get Help**



Breastfeeding is the traditional way to feed your baby, but it can take time to learn. There are times when you may need to get help.

**You need help if:**

- Your nipples or breasts hurt.
- You have a fever or feel sick.
- Your baby is not having at least 3 poopy diapers a day after the first 4 days.
- Your baby is not having at least 6 heavy wet diapers after day 5.
- Your baby is having black poops after he is 4 days old.
- Your baby is very sleepy and always has to be woken up to eat.
- You are thinking about weaning.
- You are feeling worried about breastfeeding.
- You are worried about yourself or your baby for any reason.

**Where to get help**

- Your health care provider
- Breastfeeding Hotline – Telehealth Ontario offers 24/7 Breastfeeding advice and support service: 1-866-797-0000
- Bilingual Online Ontario Breastfeeding Services – To help you search for breastfeeding services near you: [www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca](http://www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca)
- Local public health unit: 1-800-267-8097  
[www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx)
- La Leche League Canada – For mother-to-mother breastfeeding support: 1-800-665-4324  
[www.lllc.ca](http://www.lllc.ca)
- FASD Ontario: [www.fasdON.ca](http://www.fasdON.ca)
- To find a International Board Certified Lactation Consultant:  
<http://connect.ilca.org/main/why-ibclc/falc>

**Online Information:**

**Breastfeeding**

- Breastfeeding Information for Parents [www.breastfeedinginfoforparents.ca](http://www.breastfeedinginfoforparents.ca)

**Breastfeeding Videos:**

- BreastFeeding Inc  
[www.breastfeedinginc.ca/vdeoscat/english/](http://www.breastfeedinginc.ca/vdeoscat/english/)
- Breastfeeding Instructional Videos  
[www.peelregion.ca/health/family-health/breastfeeding/resources/video/index.htm](http://www.peelregion.ca/health/family-health/breastfeeding/resources/video/index.htm)

**Breastfeeding apps:**

- WYNI – Breastfeeding Information  
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/wyni-breastfeeding-information/id955007811?mt=8>
- Mom and Baby to Be  
<https://itunes.apple.com/app/mom-and-baby-to-be/id560579312?mt=8>

## Local Resources

There are many local resources available. Find out about your local resources from your health unit, your health care provider, other mothers, or the internet. Write them down in the space below for quick reference.

[illegible]



[illegible]





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