

Breastfeeding the Premature Infant

If you know that your baby may be born early, plan now to breastfeed once baby arrives. Babies born before 37 weeks gestation are premature. Breastmilk provides premature babies the nutrients and antibodies they need to grow. Your baby may not be ready to breastfeed, but you can still provide your baby breastmilk by pumping your milk.

- Providing breastmilk is a very special job that only a mom can do and allows you to be more involved in the care of your baby.
- Your breastmilk is custom made to provide the extra calories, vitamins, and minerals your premature baby needs.



Breastfeeding protects premature babies

Breastmilk:

- Protects against infections
- Helps brain development
- Helps baby grow and thrive in the early weeks
- May help baby go home from the hospital earlier

Breastfeeding:

When your baby is ready to feed from the breast, you and your baby get additional benefits. Holding baby in Kangaroo Care (skin to skin) and feeding at the breast:

- Helps a mom feel close and connected to her baby
- Keeps baby warm
- Helps mom maintain and increase milk supply
- Decreases stress in mom and baby

Planning ahead for breastfeeding success

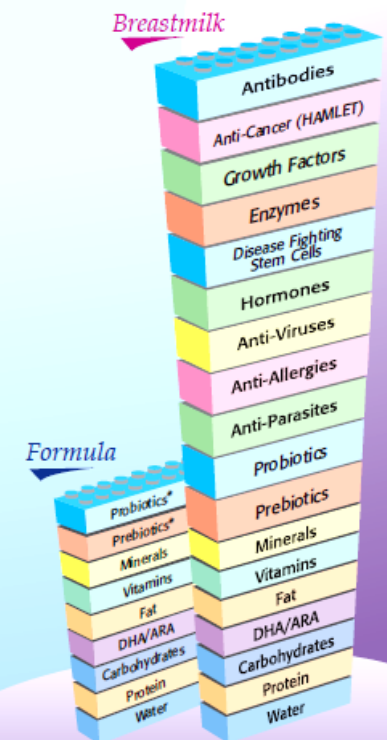
- Take a breastfeeding class during your pregnancy.
- Enroll in WIC, HANDS, and other programs that can help you take care of your baby.
- Ask WIC staff or your doctor where to find breastfeeding help in your area.

What to expect with a premature baby

Having a premature baby can be stressful and overwhelming.

- Premature babies are underdeveloped when they are born.
- Your baby may need special care while in the hospital and may require tubes and monitors.
- You may not be able to hold your baby at first.
- Some babies may need to be moved to another hospital.
- You will produce a small amount of golden thick rich first milk (colostrum).
- After a few days the amount and color of your milk will change.
- If your baby cannot breastfeed right away, start pumping your breasts within 6 hours after the birth.
- You may need to pump your milk every few hours to help increase and maintain your milk supply.

Breastmilk has **MORE**
of the Good Things Babies Need
See for Yourself!



*Not all formulas have prebiotics and probiotics.

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Special challenges feeding the premature baby

Breastfeeding the premature baby may be a challenge.

Your baby may:

- Have a hard time latching on and staying on the breast
- Get tired easily
- Have to be fed through a tube

You may:

- Be recovering from an early delivery or C-section
- Need to travel back and forth to the hospital



Getting help once your baby is born

- Ask hospital staff to help you and your baby get started with breastfeeding or pumping.
- Breastpumps can often be rented and may be paid for by insurance, Medicaid, or the WIC Program.
- The hospital staff can help you find an electric breastpump to use at home.
- When you and your baby are healthy enough, the hospital staff will help you hold your baby in Kangaroo Care (skin to skin).
- When your baby is ready to breastfeed, the hospital staff will help you and your baby with positioning and latch.
- Ask to see the lactation consultant if you have any concerns.

When your baby goes home

- If you have any problems or questions, call your WIC clinic, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor or hospital lactation consultant.
- Give yourself time to adjust to having the new baby home.
- Breastfeed or pump at least 8-12 times a day to maintain your milk supply.
- Continue to hold your baby in Kangaroo Care (skin to skin).
- Get help with household tasks.

For more information on breastfeeding, talk with your Nutritionist, Nurse or Breastfeeding Peer Counselor at the Health Department or the Lactation Consultant at the hospital where you had your baby.



Breastfeeding Welcome Here



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