

THE FIRST WEEK WITH YOUR NEWBORN



Congratulations and Welcome!

You and your family have just experienced one of the biggest changes of your lives - whether this is your first or 8th child - life will never be the same. Your baby has just made the greatest journey of its life and it is marvelous how well they manage it.

Ideally your baby had lots of skin to skin contact (placing your naked baby across your bare chest or tummy) after birth and a good long breastfeed. Because babies recognise their mother by sight, hearing, touch and smell, placing them on your skin helps with bonding and stimulates their instinct to breastfeed.

During the next few days try to have skin to skin contact with your baby as much as possible (Dad can do this too). This reassures the baby, keeps his/her temperature normal (if baby is too cold your body temperature will help to warm baby up, or if baby is too hot your body will help to cool baby down), regulates baby's heart rate and breathing, and keeps baby's blood sugar levels normal. If baby stays skin to skin undisturbed with mum for some time s/he will start looking for the breast and start breastfeeding, this is an ideal way to stimulate a sleepy baby to feed.

Breastfeeding

From around 24 weeks of pregnancy your breasts will start producing colostrum which is a semi-transparent, thick, sticky, and pale to deep yellow coloured fluid. It contains water, minerals, sugar and lysozymes - they help protect baby against germs. Colostrum is enough food for the first 2-3 days.

Baby will feed half a teaspoon of colostrum each feed in the first 24 hr and one teaspoon each feed during the second day. During the first 24 hr baby is in a "hibernating stage" – s/he still has lots of amniotic fluid (which is full of protein) in her/his stomach and lungs to give her/ him some energy. Most babies tend to have a good long feed after birth and then have a long sleep.

Your supply will increase to around 500 ml per day from 48 hr till 96 hr after birth. During this time colostrum will change into transitional milk.

Once baby is 48hr old he/she gets really hungry and will feed frequently, we call it "cluster feeding". Although it might be quite exhausting for you, baby's frequent feeding signals the brain that milk is needed now and will result in a good milk supply for the future. Frequent feeding in the first few days will influence the milk supply you'll have when baby is 8 – 10 weeks old and helps your milk supply to reach its full potential.

We encourage feeding on demand - healthy babies will indicate when they are hungry by one or more of the following:

- Searching with hands and mouth
- Mouthing and licking
- Wide open mouth with tongue out
- Crying is a late feeding cue and might interfere with effective breastfeeding

If baby shows any of these signs it is a good time to offer a feed.

In general, babies need to have 8 to 12 feeds in 24 hr. If baby has a longer sleep s/he will probably have several feeds after waking to make up for the missed ones. Babies can have growth spurts and feed more often to boost supply when they need more. As a general rule: watch the baby not the clock.

Healthy babies will wake up when they are hungry. However, we encourage you to try and feed baby at least every 6 hr. Generally, baby will feed more often (preferably every 3 to 4 h) but sometimes during the first few days some babies need some encouragement. Here is what you can do:

- Remove blankets
- Change nappy
- Undress baby
- Have skin to skin contact

When your baby is ready to feed you can offer him/her the breast.

A good latch is very important for effective stimulation, good milk transfer, and to prevent damage to your nipples.

We can teach you how to latch baby well. You may also watch our breastfeeding DVD. However here are some signs you can watch out for:

- Check pain. Although some tenderness is normal, it may continue during the first week but should ease when your milk increases in volume.
- Sharp and pinchy pain indicates that baby's tongue rubs against the tip of your nipple. That means your nipple is not deep enough in baby's mouth as baby's tongue should "milk" your breast.
- Check the shape of your nipple after a feed - it should be a normal shape only slightly longer. If it looks squashed or has a ridge to it, the latch was not deep enough.
- Check baby for signs of good milk transfer. Your baby should be swallowing after 1-4 sucks. Baby's chin should drop down while swallowing and the eyes should be open. If the baby maintains a good latch throughout the feed, your breast will soften.

You should feed baby on one breast until s/he seems satisfied and offer the second breast if baby wants more. Some babies get really sleepy during a feed and may need a bit of a reminder (tickle baby's hands and feet or blow gently on baby's face).

If baby is not feeding anymore and doesn't wake with prompting, take her/him off and give baby some cuddles. Start the next feed with the breast that baby didn't feed off this time. During the first 48 hr your baby has quite often enough after one side, and some babies only ever take one side at a time.

Babies who are growing, have wet nappies and yellow bowel motion (after a week) are getting enough milk.

It is not recommended to use a pacifier during the first weeks, as it is associated with early weaning, incorrect sucking technique on the breast, ear infection, thrush, dental problems and mastitis. It can also affect your milk supply not reaching full potential. If baby wants to suck s/he is most likely hungry and needs to feed, even if s/he has just had a feed. Remember that inside your uterus, the baby has been fed constantly and now has to adjust to a feeding pattern. Give him/her some time to do so.

Healthy babies need no formula or water, if they are feeding well, growing and have wet nappies and bowel motions. Formula and water can interfere with your milk supply – if baby's tummy is filled, s/he will be less interested in feeding.

How to know your baby is getting enough?

Firstly watch how many soiled and wet nappies your baby has per day. During the first 2 days baby should have 1-2 wet nappies and 1-2 nappies with green / black bowel motions (meconium) per 24 hr. After baby has done her/his first wee, there can be a longer break till the next. Sometimes it is hard to see if mixed with meconium or soaked into a nappy.

From Day 3-5 your baby should have 3-4 wet nappies and 2-3 light green/brown yellow bowel motions per 24 hr. From Day 5 onwards baby should have 5 to 6 wet nappies per 24 h. Bowel motions should be yellow-brown coloured now. A fully breastfed baby might not have a bowel motion for days. As long as your baby has 6 wet nappies a day and appears otherwise well, there is no need for concern.

Baby's urine can sometimes contain red/orange minerals which at first glance may look like blood. If you look closer it looks more like a powdery substance. This material is called urates and is normal during the first 4 days of a baby's life. If it still occurs after that time it can be a sign of dehydration and you should talk to your midwife about it.

A normal weight loss can occur after birth due to extra fluid leaving your baby's body. However, baby will have regained his/her birth weight at around 10 to 14 days of age. You can also tell if your baby gets enough by his/her behavior. No matter how often and for how long your baby is feeding, s/he should settle in and rest between feeds and be relaxed and calm for at least some time of the day. Babies are highly individual beings, and quite often you don't have to look far for a reason why some babies settle more than others.

Sleep

One of the things you may have heard about life with a baby is that you will never sleep as well and as much as you did during your baby free years.

One of the reasons for this is that babies need feeding around the clock, which of course also means during the night. Some babies will sleep better than others, but at least during the first few weeks your day and night rhythm will change a lot. So try to catch up on some sleep whenever your baby sleeps.

Babies arrive in our world from an environment of warmth, semi - darkness, heartbeat and stomach noises where they have been in constant contact with your body. No wonder they enjoy skin-to-skin and body contact so much.

The recommended sleeping place for a baby is in his/her own cot close to mum. However, during the first nights babies sometimes need the reassurance of mums (or dads) – a familiar body to feel safe enough to sleep. Especially during a cluster feeding period (common during the 2nd night) babies find it hard to sleep in their own cot, as they like to stay close to their food source.

No matter where your baby sleeps, s/he should always sleep on her/his back and on a firm mattress with tucked in sheets. Pillows and covers should stay away from baby's face. Your baby should also not sleep on a pillow, as s/he can roll / fall down and won't be able to turn. Anyone who smokes, is drunk or under the influence of other drugs, is obese, or has a condition which makes them hard to wake should not bed share with a baby.

Visitors

There is a lot to learn during the first few days. Mum, baby and the family need to adjust to the new life and there is lots of love and enthusiasm in the new family. There are also sleepless nights, learning to breastfeed and healing of wounds.

Although it is great to share the happy event with all the ones we love, be aware of your own and your baby's needs. Remember that after the visitors are gone, you may need to be up all night feeding your baby. Some mums prefer not to feed

in front of visitors. You and your baby's needs have to come first. Please ask us for help with managing visitors, if needed.

Baby bath

With the baby's first bath we usually wait until at least the second day. Your baby needs time to adjust and regulate his/her body temperature. Babies also find the smell of amniotic fluid on their skin soothing. If you would prefer not to bath your baby that would be fine also.

During the first few weeks it is important to keep your baby's baths short. Use a warm room where all necessary things are well prepared. As your baby hasn't got much protecting fat yet, s/he can cool down quickly. The best time to do it is after baby has had a feed. Water temperature should be 37.0 C. You can test this with your elbow. No soap is needed - baby's skin is covered with a protective acid mantle, and most baby products disturb this mantle. Just water is perfect.

Many midwives recommend to wash and dry baby's head first, as a baby can lose a lot of heat if the head is wet for too long. Baby also likes to stay wrapped up, as too much space can frighten them. So take baby's clothes off, leave the nappy on, wrap in a towel and wash baby's head first. If it is baby's first bath there is sometimes some residue from the birth left in baby's hair. Just soak it with a wet cloth and then rub gently to remove it. In severe cases soaking with olive oil can help. Wash the face, eyes from the inside to the outside, and behind ears and neck. Then wash the rest of baby's body.

When your baby gets bigger, care needs to be taken with all the creases around baby's neck. Milk and saliva can collect in the neck creases so keeping them clean and well dried prevents soreness.

There is no rule how often you need to bath your baby. Let need and convenience be your guide, if baby has passed a big bowel motion it might be more practical to bath him/her afterwards. Some babies really enjoy their baths, and can relax better after coming out of the water. In that case, make bathing a habit in the evenings. But you don't need to bath your baby very often, as s/he won't get very dirty at this early age. Less frequent bathing also saves the baby losing energy as well as their personal smell which is still soothing to them.

Be careful with baby care products. Babies don't need many products on their skin as it disturbs the natural protection. Powder is not helpful even if you like the smell. If your baby has dry skin massage some oil (olive oil is fine) into these areas especially hands and feet. Only use nappy cr me if your baby has a sore bottom. Try to wash and air-dry baby's bottom as much as possible.

Your baby can develop various skin spots. They are usually a reaction to either mum's hormones or to the first contact with a new environment. If you are concerned about them, please ask us or your midwife. There is no special care necessary and generally these spots will disappear after a few days.

Your baby's umbilicus can be washed. You can move the cord around by holding on to the clamp, but be careful not to pull on the cord too much. Make sure you dry the umbilicus well. There is no powder or alcohol needed for cleaning - just wash with water and dry. The cord will get dry and black before it comes off. It can also come off partially at first. There can be some spotting when that happens, however if the umbilicus is bleeding or releases pus and an offensive smell, please let us know. The cord will come off by itself within the first 7 days of life.

Boy's foreskin needs to be left alone. If you notice an inflammation please see your GP. Girls can have some mucous coming out of their vagina. This is like a mini period induced by mum's hormones and will not continue after baby's first week. Both girls and boys can have swollen breast glands, this again is a reaction to mum's hormones and will disappear. You don't need to do anything about it, in particular don't squeeze the tissue.

Last but not least, about mum....

The start of life with your new baby is the beginning of a new relationship. You may feel like you are on an emotional rollercoaster ride. A lot of this is hormone induced, but also a reaction to sleepless nights and the practical changes in your life. Our hormonal reactions are all well designed to keep ourselves and baby safe, to help establish good milk supply and ensure bonding.

Be kind to yourself and give yourself some time to adjust. Ideally you would have organised practical support, like precooked meals or a family member or friend who can help you, for this time. Sleep when your baby sleeps, and don't worry about house work so much. You will be back to normal soon. On the 3rd day a lot of women get a bit blue. Your pregnancy hormone levels will have dropped, your milk will start to come in, sleepless nights might catch up with you and you might be at home without professional support. No wonder everything gets a bit too much.

Over the next few weeks your body will return to normal. Your uterus will involute, and you might experience afterpains. You will notice these more during feeding or if you just had your second or further child. Your bleeding will slow down and change colour. Your wounds will heal and all the extra fluid will have passed out of your body and you will look less puffy. You can help with this by keeping your wounds clean, maybe rinse with water after you have been to the toilet. A balanced diet and rest also helps with healing. During the first few days your feet

and legs can look really swollen. This is due to the extra fluid being released out of your body. It will pass, so keep drinking, go to the toilet often, elevate your legs but also keep them mobile in between.

Your first bowel motion usually happens around the third day. If you keep it soft by drinking lots of water, eating fruits and prunes, it can help to lessen the strain and irritation, as muscles are still a bit loose on your perineum. Your milk supply will establish during the first week and your baby may have established a feeding pattern. It can take some time to get breastfeeding right. This is normal. If you struggle and need some help please ask your midwife, or contact a lactation consultant or the La Leche League.

References:

Breastfeeding resource book Module 2

Developed by R.McLaughlin, Debbie Graham and Julia Wilcox

Compendium for healthy pregnancy and normal birth by Joan Donley

Sleeping with your baby by James J. McKenna, Ph.D.

Clinical Guidelines for the Establishment of exclusive Breastfeeding by ILCA

Das gesunde und das kranke Neugeborene by Stephan Illing

Das Hebammenbuch by Maendle , Opitz- Kreuter , Wehling

Help

Please read our support group leaflet for help available in the Hamilton area

You can also consider an:

Osteopath

If you have an unsettled Baby or breastfeeding problems after a difficult birth, an Osteopath can sometimes help with cranial sacral treatment of your baby. If you yourself experience problems after birthing that could have been caused by the birth process, an osteopath might be able to help with that. Please check the yellow pages for osteopaths in your area.

Homeopath

Homeopathy is an over 200 year old holistic treatment for all kinds of problems. It is not invasive and treats the whole person and the mother and baby together and can support your child's health as s/he grows older.

Please check yellow pages for homeopaths in your area.

Suggested Reading

"Best-feeding-getting the Breastfeeding right for you" by Mary Renfrew et al.

"Womanly Art of Breastfeeding" La Leche League

"A practical Guide to Breastfeeding" Jan Riordan

"Breastfeeding Matters" & "Working Woman's Guide to Breastfeeding" Maureen Minchin

"Sleeping with your baby - A parents guide to Cosleeping" by James Mc Kenna