

Special Breastfeeding Situations

Preterm Babies

Breastmilk is important for preterm babies because it is easy to digest, protects a young immune system, and provides the skin-to-skin contact that they need. In fact, Kangaroo Care (skin-to-skin cuddling) was developed to help preemies breathe better and stabilize their condition. It was later discovered that skin-to-skin contact benefits all babies, and parents too!

If you can't breastfeed right away, express your milk by hand or pump. Your baby can be fed your milk through a feeding tube until he is ready for oral feedings. Draining your breasts regularly from the beginning will ensure healthy milk production for when he is ready and able to breastfeed. Remember, the more milk you remove, the more milk you will make.



Preemies who are fed human milk do better

Tips on breastfeeding your preemie:

- Inform your hospital staff and doctor that you plan to breastfeed.
- Ask for help when positioning your baby at the breast.
- Try using a pillow to support your baby for feedings.
- Use the laid-back, football, or cross-cradle holds.
- After your baby is latched on, squeeze your breast to move milk into your baby's mouth.
- Slowly build up the number of times you breastfeed each day as your baby grows stronger and is able to drink more milk.
- After breastfeeding your preemie, express the remaining milk to keep your supply strong.

Tips for preemies who aren't breastfeeding yet:

- Start expressing as soon after delivery as possible so your body knows it needs to keep making milk.
- Express milk at least 8 times every 24 hours.
- Try to be near your baby when you express. If you cannot, check in on his condition. Thinking of your baby can help you relax and encourage your milk to letdown.
- If possible, hold your baby skin to skin every day.

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Special Breastfeeding Situations (continued)

Multiples

No matter how you choose to feed your baby, it will require more time if you have multiples. Fortunately, all of the benefits of breastfeeding—convenience, skin-to-skin contact, and better health outcomes, among others—are multiplied with multiples. Your body will be better able to make the milk you need to feed two or more babies when your breasts are drained regularly, either through breastfeeding or expressing, especially in the first week. During the first month or two, patience, persistence, and a lot of support will help you establish your milk production and breastfeeding routine. Accept any help that is offered, and ask for support when you need it.

Tips on breastfeeding multiples:

- Have a high-quality electric double pump available or know where you can rent one (most hospitals have them available).
- Before the birth, attend a breastfeeding support group, and talk to other mothers who have breastfed multiples.
- Locate a board-certified lactation consultant for essential advice and support in the early weeks.
- Arrange for help with meals, childcare, and other responsibilities in the first weeks.
- After you are comfortable latching each baby onto your breast, you can try to feed two at one time. Ask your nurse or lactation consultant to show you different breastfeeding positions.
- Use a daily feeding log for each baby until you learn their individual patterns.
- Start a routine that supports healthy milk production in each breast. One tip is to alternate which breast that each baby nurses from at each feeding. If you have more than two babies, you may need to alternate who breastfeeds first.

If You and Your Baby Are Separated

Even if you and your baby are separated after birth because of a medical condition, you can continue to breastfeed or provide expressed milk to your newborn.

- Let hospital staff know that you want to breastfeed. Start pumping as soon as possible.
- If your baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), breastfeed your baby there, or have your expressed milk provided for your baby.
- If you or your baby are transferred to another hospital, keep expressing your milk so it can be provided for your baby.
- If you or your baby are re-hospitalized after discharge, ask about rooming-in with your baby and if the hospital can provide you with a pump.



The benefits of breastfeeding are multiplied with multiples

Take Note

Other Breastfeeding Challenges

Some women have medical conditions or situations that can (but don't always) affect milk production. If any of these impact you, talk to a lactation consultant or your healthcare provider.

Possible challenges:

- A complicated birth or significant blood loss or pain after birth
- Breast or chest surgery
- Having diabetes, a thyroid condition, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), or high blood pressure
- A history of depression, anxiety, or abuse
- Lack of support or extreme stress