



## Nursing During Pregnancy

Women who become pregnant while breastfeeding an older child often wonder whether they can continue nursing through pregnancy and after the new baby's birth. The answer is a qualified yes to both questions, depending on your medical history, your older baby's responses, your own feelings, and your milk supply.



Breastfeeding mothers who have miscarried previously or who have a history of premature delivery should stay in touch with their obstetrician and report any uterine contractions, since the nipple stimulation of breastfeeding may increase your risk of delivering too soon. Most often there is no cause for great concern, but it's important to be sensitive to your body's signals.

After the first few months of pregnancy, your milk supply will probably diminish somewhat, and the taste of your breast milk may change as well. Either of these changes may cause your baby to refuse the breast milk and eventually wean himself. You may initiate weaning yourself if you experience too much nipple tenderness or physical discomfort. If you and your older baby do continue breastfeeding, it is important to keep in mind that pregnancy and breast milk production both require extra energy. Be sure to monitor your food intake as you prepare for childbirth and get plenty of rest.

Breastfeeding both your older child and your infant, called *tandem nursing*, can in some cases ease your older child's adjustment to the new baby, address your own desire to maintain closeness with the older child, and even make child care easier in some cases as both children are fed and comforted on the breast. Again, though, tandem breastfeeding takes more energy than nursing a single child.

Keep in mind that the new baby's breastfeeding needs are the most important at this time. Your infant urgently needs the colostrum and immune-protective benefits more than your older child. To ensure that your infant receives adequate milk, breastfeed her before nursing your older child and allow her breastfeeding needs to take top priority. A one-year-old or toddler can make up for a decrease in breast milk with nutritious solid foods. When taking care of a newborn or young infant and older children as well, be sure to wash your hands frequently to prevent germs passing from one child to another.

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