

BREASTFEEDING AND BABY'S SECOND NIGHT

You've made it through your first 24 hours as a new mom, but now it's baby's second night, and your familiar heartbeat, swooshing placental arteries, comforting intestine gurgles and the soothing sounds of your lungs that baby was so accustomed to are gone. Baby is now in a crib, swaddled in a diaper, T-shirt, hat and blanket, and all sorts of strange people have been handling him. The new noises, lights, sounds and smells are unfamiliar.

But baby has found one thing — his voice.

Each time you remove baby from the breast after he comfortably drifts off to sleep, he protests — loudly! In fact, each time you put him back on the breast, he nurses for a little while and then goes back to sleep. You try again to remove him from the breast to carry him to his bassinet, but he cries again and starts rooting around, looking for you. This cycle repeats itself for what seems like hours, and you start to become convinced it's because your milk isn't in yet, and baby is starving.

That isn't the case. Baby's sudden awakening is simply due to the fact the most comforting place for him right now is at the breast. It's the closest to "home" he can get. So what do you do?

When baby drifts off to sleep at the breast after a good feeding, break the suction and slide your nipple gently out of his mouth. Don't move him except to pillow his head more comfortably on your breast. Don't try to burp him. Just snuggle until he falls into a deep sleep so you can move him without waking him. Babies go into a light sleep state (REM) first and then cycle in and out of REM and deep sleep (quiet and regular breathing with no eyelid movement) about every 30 minutes. If he starts to root again, that is fine. This is just his way of getting comfortable.

During utero, baby's hands were his best friend. He could suck his thumbs or fingers whenever he was disturbed or uncomfortable. All of a sudden, his hands have been covered with mittens. Babies need to touch and feel, and his touch on your breast will increase your oxytocin levels. So take the mittens off and loosen his blanket. He might scratch himself, but the scratch will heal quickly. Besides, he had fingernails while in the womb, and no one put mittens on him then.

Sometimes, babies just need some extra snuggling at the breast.

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