

BREASTFEEDING THE PREMATURE INFANT

Babies born at less than 38 weeks gestation may nurse well in the hospital but have problems after going home. Follow these guidelines to help ensure baby is getting plenty to eat and your milk supply is robust.

While babies are generally fed on demand, it may be difficult for early babies to let parents know when they are hungry. They may not act hungry or may seem to prefer sleeping. Early babies need to eat and sleep, so striking a delicate balance is important.

- ▶ Wake baby using skin-to-skin contact so she wakes naturally on her own.
- ▶ Try to nurse baby six to eight times in a 24 hour period rather than eight to 10 times.
- ▶ Limit the feeding to 30 to 40 minutes (including supplements, if necessary).

INSURANCE PUMPING

Since baby was born early, she isn't yet designed to work for her food. The responsibility of initiating a feeding and maintaining your milk supply isn't hers alone. That's why it's important for you to pump at least five to six times a day for 10 minutes on each side (or 15 minutes double) to increase and maintain your milk supply. A hospital-grade pump is recommended.

By the time baby is 40 to 42 weeks old, she should be nursing more frequently, effectively and efficiently. Once she is gaining weight, nursing vigorously at each feeding and is at her due date, you can cut down on the number of times you pump each day.

KANGAROO CARE

Generally, 20 to 30 minutes of skin-to-skin contact will trigger baby's nursing instincts. Place baby upright between your breasts while she is wearing only a diaper and hold her there as long as possible. This is the best way to wake her up and offers an opportunity for you and baby to cuddle and rest together. It will also improve your milk supply.

LATCHING ON

If baby has difficulty latching on, call your lactation consultant for help. Sometimes, early babies need special breastfeeding devices to help them get started.

NURSING DIARY

Keep a nursing diary to record baby's stool and urine output, number of breastfeedings in a 24-hour period and how frequently you pump.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS

Take baby back to see her healthcare provider about two days after you go home for a weight and color check. Call your lactation consultant after that visit to report baby's weight and to let her know how the feedings are going. Get baby's weight checked regularly until her due date.

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