

PATIENT INFORMATION

Breast Milk for Your Baby in the NICU/SCN

Breast Milk Is the Best Food

Congratulations on your decision to provide the best nutrition for your baby! Think of your milk as medicine for your baby. It will provide optimal nutrition and help protect your baby from many diseases and infections. It is also easy for your baby to digest. Since you delivered a premature baby, your milk will have more calories per ounce to give your baby the extra nutrition premature babies need.

You will need to use a breast pump to stimulate your body to produce milk even if your baby is not yet feeding at the breast. WakeMed will loan you a breast pump to use as long as your baby has to stay at WakeMed. There is no charge for the pump or supplies, but you must return the pump by the day of discharge. When pumping for your baby, it is important to use a pump that most effectively imitates a baby's sucking. This is why we recommend using only the large hospital-style, electric pumps that we can provide for you. Some small electric and battery-operated pumps may work well once your baby is home and nursing most of the time, but they are not adequate when you must pump for all or most feedings.

Each mother produces a different amount of milk. Newborns do not require as much milk as you may think. Small premature babies may be fed as little as 10 to 20 drops in an hour! Bigger babies still start out with less than one ounce. However, **it is important to keep emptying your breasts regularly so your milk glands continue to make more milk. Supply meets demand. Waiting longer than three to four hours to pump during the day leaves the milk glands full for too long, signaling them to decrease milk production.** Continue pumping even if you get sick or are taking medication – talk with your baby's doctor or one of the lactation consultants, but continue pumping and storing your milk!

If you are not pumping at least 2 oz. at each pumping, or at least 16 oz. every 24 hours by the time your baby is 7 days old, contact one of the lactation consultants for help.

By the time your baby is 14 days old, the ideal amount of milk is at least 25 oz. every 24 hours.

Pumping Your Milk

1. Always wash your hands before handling your breasts or the pump pieces that touch the milk.
2. Pump first thing in the morning and every two to four hours during the day. For the first week, pump at night every three to four hours also. Once your baby is 7 days old, and you are pumping at least 16 oz. a day, you may sleep up to five hours unless you wake up because your breasts are too full. This should mean you are pumping six to eight times in 24 hours. Pump more often if you feel full or if milk is leaking.
3. Double pump both breasts at least 10 minutes each time. Increase the time spent pumping as needed to ensure the breasts soften or become lighter. This may take 20 to 30 minutes. It usually helps to massage the breasts as you pump to move the milk toward the nipple. Leaving your breasts full will decrease your milk supply. **You may need to increase the time you spend pumping as your supply increases.**
4. Store the milk from each pumping in a separate container – you can get as many as you need from the nursery. Label each container with your NAME, DATE, TIME and ANY MEDICATION you have taken (*always check with your baby's doctor or a lactation consultant before taking any medication*). The first 24 pumpings should be labeled with a green dot.
5. Freeze your milk if it will not be used within 48 hours. Bring your milk to the nursery in a cooler or insulated bag. Do not use ice in the cooler, because it will thaw the milk. Once your baby is being fed, bring in fresh, unfrozen milk and give it to your baby's nurse to use first.
6. Wash all of the pump pieces that touch the milk after each use. **Do not wash the tubing.** Rinse the pieces with cold water first, then wash with hot, soapy water and rinse well twice to remove any soap residue. Any dishwashing soap will do. Let the pieces air dry on a clean paper towel.

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7. Use a microwave steam bag once a day following directions on the bag. Alternatively, you can boil your pump kit (but not the tubing) for 15 minutes once a day to sterilize the pump pieces.

Human Milk Storage

Fresh Milk

- Can be left at room temperature up to four hours
- Refrigerate as soon as possible
- If refrigerated, use within 48 hours, or freeze
- If frozen or deep frozen, use within six to 12 months

Defrosted Milk

- Refrigerate if at room temperature
- If refrigerated, use within 24 hours
- Do not refreeze

Warmed Milk

- Use within an hour
- Do not save

Many babies in the NICU are gavage-fed at first. That means, a tiny tube is put down their throats into their stomachs and milk is dripped in – the baby does not have to do anything. When your baby is ready to “nipple feed,” the first feedings can be breastfeedings. Indications that your baby may be ready to breastfeed include:

- weighing about 1200 grams (or 2½ lbs.)
- about 31-33 weeks gestation
- sucking around gavage tube
- moving hand to mouth

Once your baby is ready for more nipple feedings, if you cannot come in for each feeding, the nurses may bottle-feed with your milk. When babies are ready for nipple feedings, they are usually on a three-hour schedule.

You can talk with your baby’s nurse to have your baby on a schedule that allows you to breastfeed as often as possible. Once your baby is nursing at least once a day, you may find that your milk production increases quickly.

Tips for Increasing Milk Supply

- Ask your baby’s nurse about Kangaroo Care. Holding your baby skin-to-skin may significantly increase your milk supply. If your baby can be held, tell the nurse you would like to hold your baby skin-to-skin for a while and then pump. To do this, wear the cover gown open in the front and wear a blouse you can unbutton to put your baby on your chest. If you open your bra flaps, your baby may show interest in sucking.
- Ask about hand expression. Moms who combine pumping with hand expression can increase production by 80%!
- Take at least 20 minutes each day to consciously relax.
- Take a warm shower or get a back rub to relax before pumping.
- Gently roll your nipple between your thumb and forefinger before pumping (this feels more like the baby’s mouth than the pump does).
- Gently massage the breasts from the chest wall toward the nipple before and as you pump.
- Pump right after visiting your baby or after talking to your baby’s nurse. Spend as much time with your baby as you can.
- Arrange a comfortable, private place to pump.
- Look at a picture of your baby while pumping.
- Switch the pump back and forth several times when the milk flow slows if using a single pump set-up.
- Ask about power-pumping. For one hour, alternate pumping and massage every 10 minutes.
- Ask for a double pump set-up to stimulate both breasts at once. Then switch to single pumping and massaging when the milk flow slows.
- Cuddle with an older child or hold a piece of clothing your infant has worn – the sense of smell is powerful!
- While pumping, visit with someone, even on the phone, listen to music, read or watch TV so you are not just staring at the pump.

Ask for Help When You Need It

The lactation consultants and the NICU/SCN staff are here to help you with your baby. We will try to arrange to have a lactation consultant help you with the first breastfeedings, until your baby is latching on and feeding easily. If you have additional questions, one of the lactation consultations or your baby’s nurse can provide you with a pamphlet called “Breastfeeding Your Baby.”

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