

For the Caregiver of a Breastfed Baby

by Nancy Mohrbacher, IBCLC, FILCA

You already know that you make a difference to the breastfed baby in your care. But you may not know what a key role you play in helping baby's mother meet her breastfeeding goals. Here are some of the many ways you can support her:

1

AVOID OVERFEEDING

Know breastfeeding norms. Most breastfed babies take smaller feedings and feed more often than babies fed formula. At an average feeding, a breastfed baby older than 1 month takes 3 to 4 ounces (90 to 120 mL) of milk.

Feed when baby shows signs of hunger rather than on a schedule. Cues such as rooting and hand-to-mouth mean it's time to feed. It is common for breastfed babies to feed more often during some parts of the day than others.

Feed slowly using paced bottle feeding. When fed slowly, baby feels full with less milk, reducing mother's need to pump. If baby is older than 6 to 7 months, she may be fed by cup. If bottle fed, expect feedings to take about 15 to 30 minutes.

Here's how paced bottle feeding works:

~ hold baby semi-upright or upright (see photo) and tap her lips with the nipple until she opens wide.

~ help baby latch far enough onto the nipple so her lips close on the nipple's base rather than its shaft or tip. (Gagging means baby needs a shorter nipple.) If baby's lips are pulled in, use your fingers to flange them out.

~ during feedings, hold the bottle nearly horizontal, so the flow isn't too fast.

~ build in pauses every few minutes by lowering the end of the bottle so milk runs out of the nipple. Or remove the nipple from baby's mouth and rest it on her lower lip.

~ repeat throughout the feeding until baby is done. Switch sides halfway through.

~ stop when baby stops, even if there's milk left.

~ burp baby after feeding to bring up any air.



2

ENCOURAGE BREASTFEEDING

One key way mother keeps her milk production steady is frequent breastfeeding. You can help by encouraging her to sit down and breastfeed just before leaving baby with you and as soon as she returns.

To make this easier:

- ~ make comfortable seating available,
- ~ offer a private area for nursing, if desired,
- ~ make it clear that breastfeeding is welcome and encouraged,
- ~ if mother is due to arrive soon and baby seems hungry, feed just a little milk until she can breastfeed.

The more times each day a mother breastfeeds, the less milk she must pump. Breastfed babies need on average about 25 to 30 oz. (750 to 900 mL) per day. The more milk baby gets directly from mother, the less pumped milk is needed.

3

STORE & HANDLE MILK WITH CARE

You can also support mother by handling her milk with care so that little milk is discarded.

- ~ let mother know if baby regularly takes less milk than is in her containers.
- ~ follow the milk storage guidelines she provides.

~ thaw and warm milk gently and gradually, keeping heat low. Swirl the milk to mix layers. Don't shake it.

Milk can be thawed in the refrigerator or overnight. You

can also thaw or warm milk in other ways:

- ~ hold the container under warm running water for a few minutes.
- ~ hold the container in water previously heated on the stove. Do not heat the milk directly on the burner.

***If you use water to thaw or warm milk, tilt or hold the container, so the water cannot seep under the lid. Feed thawed milk right away or refrigerate it.**

****Do not thaw or warm milk in a microwave, which changes the milk and heats it unevenly. Even if you swirl or shake the milk afterwards, hot spots remain that can burn baby's throat.**

By supporting breastfeeding in these ways you can provide great quality of care for the breastfed baby. And at the same time you can make life easier for mother and the entire family.

For more helpful information, see:



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