



# Breastfeeding Basics

## 1. Breastfeeding patterns:

It is normal for a baby to breast feed long and often in the early days. Watch your infant and not the clock to determine when to nurse and for how long. It is a good idea to learn to recognize your infant's early signs of hunger:

- Making a "serious face" in his sleep (wrinkling his forehead)
- Making sucking and chewing motions with his mouth
- Bringing his hands to the face and making fists
- Rooting and "eating" his hands

When you see this behavior, you should nurse your infants right away. Crying is the late sign of hunger.

Unlike formula fed infants, breastfed babies eat much more often than every 3-4 hours because breast milk is digested much faster and more efficiently than formula. It is absolutely normal for an exclusively nursed infant to eat 10-12 times in 24 hours or more. In the morning women usually have greater volume of milk, so that a breastfed infant may get more milk in a feeding and sleep longer afterwards. In the evening, women produce smaller amounts of milk but it is higher in fat, thus the baby may have several mini nursing sessions in an hour or two to fill up his/her stomach. This feeding pattern is called cluster feeding.

## 2. Establishing good milk supply:

In the first few days after birth women produce colostrum, the yellow or golden first milk that has high concentration of nutrients and immunities, but is small in quantity (teaspoons, not ounces). The production of colostrum is controlled by hormones and even women who do not wish to breastfeed will make colostrum. After several days post birth, the production of mature milk depends only on the frequent removal of it from the breast (infant breastfeeding/

pumping/hand expression). This concept is called the supply and demand. When an infant is nursing often and well the mother will produce enough milk for him. Scheduling feedings, supplementing with formula, and giving pacifiers may compromise a mother's milk supply. The body "determines" whether or not to make milk in the first two weeks after birth. Thus, breastfeeding on demand is especially important during this time.

## 3. Making sure the baby is getting enough food:

Following are the indicators of good weight gain in an infant:

- Nurses well (with clear signs of swallows) at least 10-12 times in 24 hours
- Has at least 5 quarter size yellow stools in 24 hours
- Has 6-8 soaking wet diapers in 24 hours
- Does not cry excessively
- Does not sleep excessively (breastfed babies wake up every 45 min-2.5 hours to nurse)
- Gains about 1 oz per day
- Regains his birth weight by 2 weeks (breastfed babies usually gain a little above their birth weight)

## 4. Breastfeeding is not working—Red Flags:

- Nipple and/or breast pain (breastfeeding should not hurt)
- Lethargic, sleepy baby
- Infrequent and small amounts of stools
- Scant, concentrated urine
- Crying baby
- An unhappy looking baby
- Scheduling of feedings
- Formula supplementations

If you need any additional information regarding this, please contact the WIC office at 718-686-3799.

