



Breastfeeding Committee for Saskatchewan

www.thebcs.ca

Important:

Establishing and maintaining your milk supply is essential even if your preterm baby is not at the breast.

Football and cross cradle holds are often the most effective for breastfeeding your premature baby.

Some preterm babies require supplementation until they are mature enough to be able to extract a sufficient amount of milk from the breast.

For further information contact:

Local Public Health Nurse

International Board Certified
Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)

Local breastfeeding support
Group

Saskatchewan HealthLine 811

Breastfeeding your Premature Baby

Advantages of breast milk/breastfeeding your premature baby:

- More easily digested proteins in breast milk.
- Fewer infections in the infant because of anti-inflammatory and anti-infective agents in breast milk.
- Better weight gain because of the presence of lipase which helps digest milk fat more efficiently.
- Higher fat content in breast milk.
- Increased eye and brain development because of long chain fatty acids and antioxidants.

Getting ready:

- As a mother of a premature baby, you have a very important role in providing the most normal nutrition possible for your baby.
- Some babies will be able to breastfeed sooner than others depending on your baby's health, gestational age, ability to coordinate suck/swallow/breathe, and sucking strength.
- If your baby is not able to come to the breast because of medical reasons, he/she may be fed by nasogastric tube/finger feeding/bottle feeding, using your expressed breast milk.
- To get started, learn how to express your milk. There are three methods: hand (manual) expression, pumping (double electric pumping with a hospital grade pump is recommended to establish and maintain long term milk supply) or a combination of hand expression and pumping.
- Pump every 2-3 hours or 8-10 times in 24 hours for 10-25 minutes.
- Pump to help build your supply even if your baby is doing some breastfeeding, because a premature baby's suck is not as strong or as effective as a full term baby's suck.
- Use hands on pumping to pump more milk.
<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/maximizing-milk-production.html>

Effective breastfeeding positions:

- The most effective positions for breastfeeding your premature baby are football/clutch hold and cross cradle hold.
- Occasionally preterm infants need to use a nipple shield to create the negative pressure needed to extract the milk from the breast; discuss this with your Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).



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How do I know if my baby is getting enough breast milk when I am at home?

Look for the following clues:

- Long rhythmic draws in the jaw
- Regular swallowing (i.e., every 3-4 sucks or less, usually audible)
- Infant content after feeding
- Breast fullness appears less after feeding
- Frequent wet diapers (i.e., 5-6 heavy clear voids/day)
- Regular, yellow seedy stools (i.e., 2-10/day)
- Back to birth weight by 2-3 weeks
- Gaining ½-1 ounce or 15-30 grams/day for the first three months

How do I know if my baby needs a supplement in addition to breastfeeding?

- Preterm babies may require a supplement in addition to breastfeeding until they get closer to their due date.
- Supplements can be given by supplemental nursing system, finger feeding or bottle; discuss these options with your Lactation Consultant to help set up an individualized plan.
- If your milk supply decreases or seems low, discuss ways to increase your supply with your Lactation Consultant.

Resources in the Community:

- Lactation Consultants and Nutritionists available for consultation at some Public Health Centres
- Family physician
- Websites:

<https://kellymom.com/ages/newborn/nb-challenges/preemie-links/>

<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-premature-babies/>

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/tn6190>

References:

1. AAP Breastfeeding and the use of Human Milk, Pediatrics 2012
2. Dr. Jack Newman's Guide to Breastfeeding. Newman & Pitman. 2014
3. Breastfeeding Made Simple: The Seven Natural Laws of Breastfeeding. Mohrbacher & Kendall-Tackett. 2010
4. Breastfeeding & Human lactation Riordan & Wambach 2016
5. Breastfeeding Answer Book. LLL International. Revised 2012
6. Stanford University – Hands on pumping video.
<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/maximizing-milk-production.html>

