

Strategies for Success

TAKE A CLASS ON BREASTFEEDING—Attending may increase your chances of success while providing you with an opportunity to talk with other parents and to practice latching~on with a doll.

OBTAIN A BOOK ON BREASTFEEDING--The more information you have the more likely you are to succeed. A book is more readily available in the middle of the night when most problems seem to occur. Recommended books include, “The Nursing Mother’s Companion,” by Kathleen Huggins and “The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding,” by La Leche League.

WATCH A VIDEO ON BREASTFEEDING--The Medela video reviews much of the pertinent information you will be given during your prenatal visits. However, its most valuable attribute is its in-depth, footage showing three different newborn babies latching-on. (CAUTION--the video does not replace the prenatal information). Spouses, partners, mothers or other family members may also enjoy watching the video along with you. It’s about an hour long, you may want watch it in two sittings.

OBTAIN A PUMP OR LEARN TO HAND EXPRESS--Once the baby arrives, it can be overwhelming and hard to learn anything new (especially in your new sleep deprived emotional state). If you will be using a pump contemplate reading the directions, putting your pump together and running it. Practice manipulating the suction. With the machine off, check to see that the flange fits your breast. It will be much easier to learn how the pump works now than after delivery or under duress because your baby is unable to nurse correctly. If interested, ask for our hand expression handout.

FEED ON DEMAND--Remember that the baby will need 8-30 feedings on the first day and 8-15 a day for a few more weeks. The baby’s stomach can empty in as little as 45-90 minutes, so it is possible to feed for 45 minutes and then feed again just 45 minutes later. When a baby feeds frequently they are getting a lot of the hindmilk needed for good weight gain. Frequent feeding like this is common during a growth spurt. There are at least five growth spurts, 2-3 in the first 6 weeks of life and one at 3 months and again at 5-6 months. There are some schools of thought that a baby needs to be on a rigid schedule from day one. While all children thrive on routine, breastfed children thrive with feeding on demand. Your baby is growing and will need more breastmilk during these growth spurts. Furthermore, during the first few months your body is learning how to make breastmilk. Therefore, placing the baby on a rigid schedule will interfere with your baby’s growth and your milk production. Moreover, it is painful to make a baby go hungry~ that is why they cry! Finally, feed at the earliest signs of hunger-licking, hand sucking, etc.

PRACTICE PROPER POSITIONING AND LATCH~ON--Baby will be better able to latch-on correctly if mother limits labor pain medications and baby is allowed to rest on mother’s abdomen immediately upon delivery until he or she finishes nursing. Baby should not be removed unless ill. On subsequent nursings position baby so that his or her abdomen is facing yours and tickle the baby’s lip with your nipple until the mouth opens wide. When the mouth opens wide, quickly latch the baby onto a generous amount of areola. If there is any discomfort after about 30 seconds, place your finger in the corner of the baby’s mouth to break the suction. Once the suction is broken, re-latch and work on getting more of the areola into baby’s mouth. Lastly, flare the lips, and press the baby’s chin and nose into the breast.

RALLY FOR SUPPORT--The early weeks of parenthood have many challenges. All your energy is focused on this new little being. There is so much to learn about caring for a baby. Sometimes chaos occurs, simply because education and preparation cannot replace the real-life experience of having a newborn. Parents can only prepare so much for it. When chaos occurs it is imperative that the mother receive support from her helpers. Surround yourself with helpful supportive people. Clear your schedule for these early weeks. Plan to have your spouse, a family member, doula or other help available for a few weeks. Prepare dinners and freeze them ahead of time. Eat off of paper plates. Limit guests. Let others prepare food, grocery shop, and house clean. Above all, keep your focus, the most important thing for you to do is to take care of yourself so you can feed the baby.