Breastfeeding

Why is breastfeeding best?

- Breastfed babies have fewer health problems than babies who aren't breastfed. This is because your breast milk has antibodies that help keep your baby from getting sick. They help protect your baby from infections and allergies.
- Breast milk has nutrients in it that help your baby grow.
- Breast milk changes as your baby grows to give him just what he needs as he develops.
- Breast milk is free and always ready when your baby wants to eat.
- Breastfeeding can help you and your baby bond and get to know each other.
- Breastfeeding can help you recover faster from pregnancy and lose some of the weight you gained.

Do you need to eat a special diet when you're breastfeeding?

No. Just eat healthy foods, like whole-grain bread and pasta, lean meat, low-fat milk products and fruits and vegetables. You may need 300 to 500 extra calories a day when you're breastfeeding to help you keep a good energy level.

Keep taking your prenatal vitamin, or take a multivitamin, every day. This can help give you nutrients that you may not get enough of in food.

When you're breastfeeding, you need 290 micrograms of iodine each day. Iodine helps your baby's body make thyroid hormones that help his bones and nerves develop. Not all prenatal vitamins or multivitamins contain iodine, so eat foods that have iodine in them, like fish, dairy products, iodized salt and bread and cereal enriched with iodine (look for "enriched" or "fortified" on the package label). Ask your provider if you need to take an iodine supplement.

How do you know if you're making enough milk?

Your body makes as much breast milk as your baby needs. As you and your baby get used to breastfeeding, your body learns when your baby needs more milk and makes as much as he needs. Your baby is probably getting enough milk if he:

- Is gaining weight
- Is making six to eight wet diapers a day by the time he's 5 to 7 days old

If you're worried that your baby's not getting enough milk, talk to your baby's health care provider or a lactation consultant. A lactation consultant is a person who has special training to help women breastfeed.

Does your baby need vitamin D?

Yes. Vitamin D helps make bones and teeth strong. But breast milk does not contain all the vitamin D your baby needs. Give your baby vitamin D drops starting in the first few days of life. Ask your baby's provider what kind of drops to use.

watch & learn

Watch videos on how to have a healthy pregnancy at: **marchofdimes.org/videos**

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Can you store breast milk?

Yes. You can keep pumped breast milk in the refrigerator or freezer. Write the date on the container before storing it. Follow these guidelines:

Where	How long
Refrigerator (temperature must be 32 F to 39 F)	5 to 8 days
Freezer inside a refrigerator	2 weeks
Freezer that has its own door (not inside a refrigerator)	3 to 6 months
Separate freezer	6 to 12 months

Here's how to thaw milk when you're ready to use it:

1. To thaw frozen milk, put the bottle or bag in the refrigerator or in a bowl of warm water. Make sure the bottle or bag is sealed so that water doesn't get into the milk. Pour the amount of thawed milk you need for your baby into a bottle for feeding. Once milk is thawed, use it within 24 hours.
2. To warm thawed or refrigerated milk, put the bottle or bag under running hot water or in a bowl of warm water. Never heat breast milk in the microwave. It kills nutrients in the milk. And the milk can heat unevenly and create hot spots that could burn your baby's mouth.
3. Shake the bottle or bag. Put a drop or two of milk on the back of your hand to test the temperature. If it's too hot, let it cool.

How long should you breastfeed?

It's best to breastfeed your baby for 1 year. Even when she starts eating other foods (usually after 6 months), you can still keep breastfeeding. Your body makes breast milk as long as your baby breastfeeds.

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