

First Moments of Breastfeeding

Miracle of Skin

The first breastfeeding at the baby's own pace, skin-to-skin with the mother is an important moment. The mother's gaze, voice and skin feel safe, and the mother's own body keeps the baby warm. Skin-to-skin contact stabilizes the baby's breathing, circulation and blood sugar levels. Good bacteria transfer from the mother's skin and milk into the baby which boosts the development of the immune system. Babies tend to feed more often in skin-to-skin contact which boosts milk production.

Nurturing Hormones

Oxytocin is a hormone that is released when a person feels affection, enjoys touch or falls in love. Oxytocin is also crucial for breastfeeding: it triggers the let down. When the mother looks and touches her baby right after the delivery, she will experience an oxytocin surge. This is how nature intended as oxytocin stimulates uterine contraction and reduces blood loss. It gets the all-important first drops of milk flowing. This is the start of the life-long bond between the mother and the baby.

First Feeding

The first feeding is important for the continuation of breast feeding. Skin-to-skin contact with mother and baby right after the birth allows the baby to follow his instincts, helps to establish lactation, and the baby is more likely to have a good latch from the beginning. A good

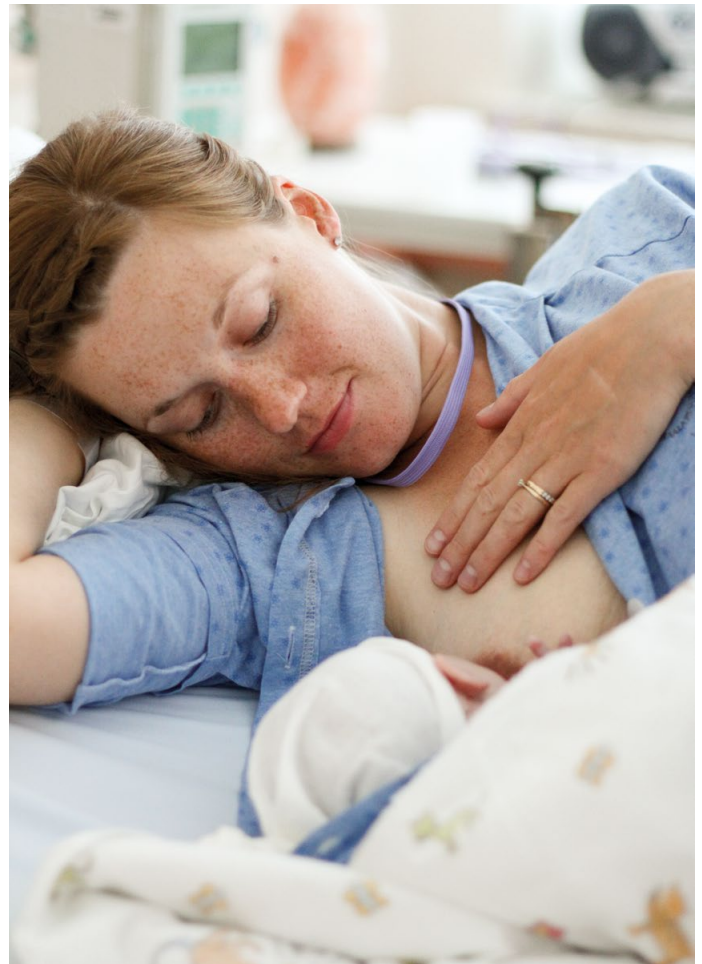
latch is the key to everything: efficient sucking, milk supply, healthy breasts and nipples. A peaceful start may help avoid many problems when establishing breastfeeding.

Milk Is Important

Although first breastfeeding is not just for eating, the first droplets of colostrum are important. Colostrum is not only food for the baby, it is also packed full of antibodies to protect the newborn. Even if the baby is not able to breastfeed right after the birth, you should express the colostrum for the baby. A tiny drop makes all the difference.

Different Beginning

Sometimes either the mother or the baby needs special care after the delivery, and breastfeeding is not immediately possible. There is still no need to worry as the first feeding can be postponed. Even if breastfeeding were not yet possible, the baby should be kept skin-to-skin, either by the mother or another family member. You can induce lactation by expressing milk at least eight times a day. This mimics the frequent feedings during the baby's first week. After separation, skin-to-skin contact will evoke the baby's breast crawl instinct. This instinct will prevail over several weeks. Skin-to-skin contact is also a way to help solve multiple breastfeeding issues later on, including a poor latch, weakness and tiredness at the breast, or breast refusal. 💧



Riikka Käkelä-Rantalainen

The Baby Knows

The first journey to the breast starts right after the birth. A healthy newborn has amazing abilities:

- After a short rest on the mother's tummy, he'll be alert and fully awake.
- The baby will seek eye contact with the mother, and look and touch the breast.
- The baby can crawl to the breast unassisted.
- The baby prepares the breast and himself for feeding by licking the nipple.
- The baby latches on independently and starts sucking, usually within an hour from the birth.

