

Your Health After Pregnancy: Breastfeeding



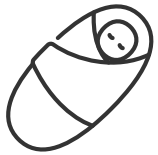
Having a plan for how to feed your baby after delivery is very important.

Babies can be fed with infant formula or by breast or chest feeding. Breast-feeding or chest feeding means feeding a baby with human milk. People may nurse directly from the breast or pump their milk and feed the baby with a bottle. Breast milk provides nutrients, hormones, and antibodies that are very beneficial for babies.



Molly Lepic, DO

Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
UW School of Medicine and Public Health



Breastfeeding benefits to baby:

- Easier to digest for babies
- Fewer childhood illnesses, including gastrointestinal illness; ear infections; lower respiratory tract infections
- Lower rates of childhood asthma
- Lower rates of childhood and adult obesity
- Lower rates of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes throughout life



Breastfeeding benefits to parent:

- Decreased bleeding after birth
- Lower rates of maternal diabetes
- Lower rates of maternal high blood pressure
- Decreased cardiovascular health risk
- Lower rates of breast and ovarian cancer



Can breastfeeding be birth control?

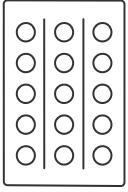
Breast/chest feeding can help prevent pregnancy, though breastfeeding as birth control is not as effective as other methods. For breastfeeding to act as birth control, ALL of the following must be true:

- You are feeding directly from the chest (not pumping)
- Feeding is around-the-clock, at least every four hours without gaps
- You do not feed your baby anything other than breast milk
- You stop bleeding within six weeks after giving birth and do not get periods
- Your baby is younger than six months old

Listen to **Fourth Trimester: Breastfeeding** to learn more.



Scan here or visit the link below:
<https://womenshealthcast.podbean.com/e/4thtri-breastfeeding>



Does birth control affect breastfeeding?

Spacing between pregnancies is important. It gives your body time to heal and recover and reduces your risk

of a future baby delivered early or with low birth weight. You may want to consider using birth control after delivery for pregnancy prevention. Some methods of birth control may affect milk supply.

Birth control methods that contain estrogen may reduce milk supply. These include:

- estrogen + progesterone birth control pills
- the vaginal ring
- the skin patch

Methods that do not contain hormones will have to no effect on milk supply. These options include:

- copper IUD
- tubal sterilization
- vasectomy
- condoms

Progesterone-only methods of birth control are unlikely to affect milk supply if you start using them six weeks after delivery. These options include:

- arm implant (Nexplanon)
- hormonal IUDs
- progesterone-only birth control pills



Are vaccines and medications safe while breastfeeding?

Most common vaccines are safe to receive while breastfeeding. Your doctor or health care provider can help you figure out if any medications you use are not safe to continue while breastfeeding.



What should I eat and drink while breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding uses a lot of energy. It is important to drink plenty of water and eat a well-balanced diet while breastfeeding.

- Breastfeeding people need about 500 extra calories a day
- You may want to take a prenatal vitamin or multivitamin to supplement while breastfeeding
- Drink extra water and fluids



Are there substances to avoid while breastfeeding?

You can talk to your doctor or your baby's doctor about substances to avoid while breastfeeding. Some substances may include:

- Smoking and other tobacco use
- Marijuana
- Illegal drugs or prescription drugs that were not prescribed to you
- Alcohol in large amounts



More Resources

Breastfeeding FAQs – American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
<https://go.wisc.edu/h3u432>

Community Resources – Public Health Madison Dane County
<https://go.wisc.edu/157hcq>

Postpartum: First 6 Weeks After Childbirth – UW Health
<https://go.wisc.edu/308946>