

Consumer Health: Questions about breastfeeding

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The American Academy of Pediatrics has affirmed its recommendation and advocacy for breastfeeding, stating, "Research has shown that breastfeeding is linked to decreased rates of lower respiratory tract

infections, severe diarrhea, ear infections and obesity. Breastfeeding is associated with lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome, as well as other protective effects."

Specifically, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation is for:

- Exclusive breastfeeding of infants for the first six months of life before introducing nutritious complementary foods.
- Maternity care practices at birth hospitals or centers that improve breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity.
- Breastfeeding as long as mutually desired for two years or beyond.
- Support of mothers who choose to breastfeed beyond the first year, including protections against workplace barriers.
- Policies that protect breastfeeding and are essential to supporting families in sustaining breastfeeding.

As important as breastfeeding is, though, it can be challenging. And it's like any other new skill: It needs to be learned, and questions and concerns often can arise along the way.

Learning the positions that work best for you and your baby is an important first step. A newborn's feeding pattern can be unpredictable, but you can look for cues from your baby that can signal readiness to feed and satisfaction when finished.

Maintaining your [milk](#) supply during breastfeeding is important for your baby's health and growth. Many factors can cause a low milk supply, including not breastfeeding often enough, supplementing breastfeeding and an ineffective latch.

Babies sometimes suddenly will refuse to breastfeed after breastfeeding

well for months. This doesn't necessarily mean your baby is ready to wean, though. Your baby may be trying to tell you something. Common causes of a "breastfeeding strike" include discomfort from teething, thrush or an ear infection; a cold or stuffy nose that makes breathing difficult during breastfeeding; stress or distraction; and reduced milk supply. Here are some tips for managing this time and getting your breastfeeding pattern back on track.

Breast milk contains the right balance of nutrients for your baby to boost the [immune system](#) and promote growth and health. You might have questions, however, about your own diet while breastfeeding. What foods are best? Do you need to increase your [calorie intake](#)? Are there foods you should avoid? Here are some basic nutrition tips for breastfeeding moms.

If you need to take medications while you're [breastfeeding](#), you may have questions about safety and the effects on your baby. Almost any [drug](#) that's present in your blood will transfer into your [breast milk](#) to some extent. Most medications do so at low levels and pose no risk to most infants. However, some drugs can become concentrated in breast milk. As a result, every medication must be considered separately.

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