
SECTION 3

Learning to Breastfeed

Breastfeeding Positions

When you are about to feed your baby make sure you and your baby are in a position that makes it easy to breastfeed. Mothers and babies can breastfeed in many different positions. At first, you may find you are more comfortable in a certain position like sitting back in a favourite chair or lying in your bed. As you and your baby become breastfeeding experts, you will be able to feed your baby anywhere, while walking, carrying him in a carrier, or sitting at the table.



Whichever position you like to use (laid back breastfeeding, sitting up or lying down), your baby should be in a position that allows for a deep latch and easy swallowing. Here are a few points to keep in mind:

- Have your back well supported.
- Make sure you are in a position that does not cause you pain (from an episiotomy or caesarean-section).
- Your baby's ear, shoulder and hip should be in a straight line.
- Your baby's head should be slightly tilted back. This allows him to latch deeply and swallow easily.
- Have a drink for yourself within easy reach before you start.

Helping Your Baby to Latch

When your baby is ready to feed, bring him to your breasts. There are many positions and many ways to latch. Here are some tips that may help.

Tummy to Mommy – Position your baby's tummy against your tummy. Hold your baby's shoulder and body as babies do better when they can freely lift and move their heads.

Positions – In a sitting position, have your fingers on both sides of his head below the ears or supporting his neck. In a laid-back or in a side-lying position your baby is already free to move his head.



Lying down

When you are tired (and all new mothers are tired!) it helps to be able to breastfeed lying down.

- Lie on your side, with a pillow under your head. Some mothers like a pillow behind their backs or one between their knees, too.
- Let the pillow support the weight of your head.
- Have your baby on her side and facing you.
- Pull her in close so that her nose is level with your nipple and her chin presses against your breast. When she tips her head back and opens her mouth wide, bring her in closer to help her latch on.

The football hold

(when breastfeeding from the left breast)

- Put a pillow behind your back and beside you to support your arm and the baby.
- Hold your baby beside you with her body between your left elbow and your side, so that her legs and feet are towards your back.
- Your left hand will be behind her shoulders and neck.
- You can support your breast with your right hand.

Laid-back breastfeeding (Biological nurturing)

- Lie on your back with pillows to raise your head and shoulders and get comfortable.
- While skin-to-skin, put your baby tummy down on your chest.
- Support her bottom and shoulders with your hands.
- When ready, your baby will start looking for your breast. Your baby will lift up her head, push with her legs and use her hands to help her find the nipple. At first, she might just lick the nipple or might bob her head up and down over the breast. After a while she will find the nipple and latch on.
- If your nipple feels sore as your baby sucks or you are not comfortable, you can move your baby a little until it feels better. You want him to have as much of the breast as possible in her mouth.





The cross-cradle position

(when breastfeeding from the left breast)

- Hold your baby with your right arm.
- Put your right hand behind her shoulders and neck.
- You can support your breast with your left hand.



The cradle position

(when breastfeeding from the left breast)

- Hold your baby in your left arm, with her head near your elbow. Your hand holds her bottom.
- You can support your breast with your right hand if you need to, or use your right hand to help support your baby's weight.

Any position that is comfortable for you and your baby is an acceptable position. A good position allows a good latch.

Guiding hand – In a sitting position, you may need to support your breast while latching. When using your fingers to cup your breast, make sure they are well back from the dark or pink area (areola) around your nipple.

Latch – Hold your baby's mouth at the height of your nipple. When he latches well, his chin will be pressed into your breast, his head will be tipped back, and the top of his nose may be touching your breast. You want him to have your nipple and part of your breast in his mouth.

Getting a big mouth on your breast – Your baby's chin will be touching your breast, about an inch from your nipple. Then wait for his mouth to open wide over your nipple. Then, using the thumb of your breast guiding hand, gently push your areola into his mouth. Your nipple will be almost the last part in his mouth. Tuck his shoulders in more. With a deep latch, there will be more areola in his mouth and you will be more comfortable. Your baby can now start to suckle. You don't need to push your baby onto your breast. In fact, babies don't like getting pushed and may push back against your hand. This can make you think your baby does not want to feed. When sitting you may use a foot stool to help stabilize your lap and help the pillow stay in place.

Pillows – Any kind of pillow can support you especially under your wrist and elbow. They can also protect your scar if you had a caesarean section.

Final look – When your baby is feeding you will notice his chin is tucked into your breast, his head is tilted slightly back, and his nose is free.



“*Breastfeeding is a learning process, and it may take longer than you expected. It is the most comforting and emotionally bonding experience you can have with your baby. Even at 6 months, if she gets really upset, holding her skin-to-skin and/or breastfeeding her will always soothe my daughter.*”

If your baby fusses and doesn't latch on, try these things:

- Move him back to an upright position between your breasts.
- Stroke and talk to your baby until he calms down.
- Calm yourself. This will calm your baby, too.
- Switch to a different breastfeeding position.
- See if he will latch on by himself in the laid-back position.
- Express some milk on your nipple so your baby will smell and taste it right away.

If you are unable to latch your baby, ask for help. For information on Getting Help, go to page 40 of this booklet.

How to Tell if Your Baby is Latched Well

While your baby is nursing you will know your baby is latched on well if these things are happening:

- Breastfeeding is comfortable for you.
- Your baby has a strong, slow, regular suck.
- You can hear swallowing.
- Your baby's mouth is wide open with flanged lips. If your baby has a deep latch you might not see his lips.
- Your baby's ears or temple are moving while he sucks.

When your baby is finished nursing:

- Your nipples will have a normal, rounded shape and they should not look pinched.
- Your breasts feel softer. This is more noticeable during the first few weeks of breastfeeding.
- Your baby should be relaxed and content. Younger babies may fall asleep when they are done feeding. Older babies may stay awake but let you know they are done feeding by turning away or starting to play.
- Younger babies often fall asleep at the breast, but when you take them away, they wake up again. If your baby does this, it is a sign that he was not yet finished.

