

# Feeding Our Youngest

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## Thinking about Breastfeeding? Good for You and Baby Too!

Do you have questions about breastfeeding? Many moms do, even experienced ones. Here are some often-asked questions and answers from experts — and moms themselves!

**Why should I breastfeed?** Breastfeeding is important food for your baby — it provides custom-made food and medicine combined. Breast milk also changes as your baby grows. Breastfeeding:

- offers all the nutrients babies need for their best growth and development.
- helps babies fight off infections and illness **before** their immune system is fully developed and for as long as they breastfeed.
- provides everything your baby needs for the first six months of life.

### Health benefits for baby:

- Healthier immune system.
- Breast milk is easier to digest than formula.
- Decreased risk for allergies.
- Helps brain development.
- Decreased risk of childhood obesity.

Babies who are breastfed or are fed expressed breast milk are at lower risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS, compared with babies who were never fed breast milk. According to research, the longer you exclusively breastfeed your baby (meaning not supplementing with formula or solid food), the lower his or her risk of SIDS. For more information, visit: [https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/Breast-feed\\_Baby\\_SIDS\\_final.pdf](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/Breast-feed_Baby_SIDS_final.pdf)



### Health benefits for the breastfeeding mom:

- Easier weight loss.
- Uterus returns to its normal size more quickly.
- Reduced risk of some types of cancer.
- Reduced risk of some chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Breastfeeding helps you and your baby know just how much they need to eat. Babies can tell when they have eaten enough, and breastfeeding moms learn to trust their baby's fullness cues.

Breastfeeding is important for mom, too! Breastfeeding, even for a short time, significantly lowers a woman's chance of Type 2 diabetes later in life. Breastfeeding helps reduce a mom's risk of certain breast and ovarian cancers. Women who

breastfeed are less likely to develop cardiovascular (heart) disease and also hypertension (high blood pressure) than mothers who never breastfed.

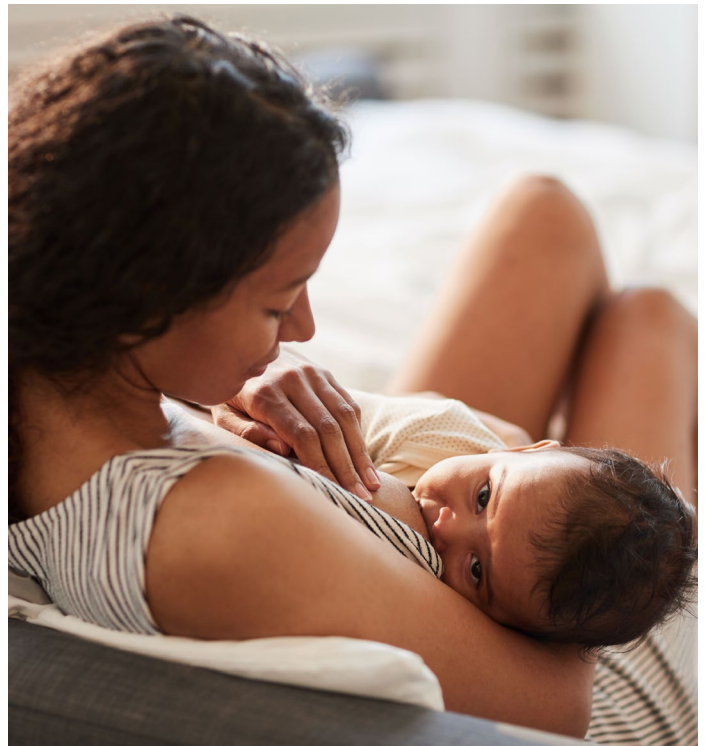
**Feeding my baby is an important job! How will I know if I'm breastfeeding well enough?** It is true — feeding your baby is very important, and there are several ways to know that you and your baby's breastfeeding partnership is working well! Remember, although breastfeeding is natural, it is a learned process for both you and your baby. You will both get better with just a little practice and patience on your part.

You can tell that baby is getting plenty of milk in a few ways. One way is weight gain. It's normal for a newborn to lose a little weight just after birth, but after several days, it is typical for babies to gain ½ ounce to one ounce each day up to age 3 months. Your baby will be weighed at every health check-up, so talk with your baby's health-care provider or clinician to be sure your baby is gaining the right amount of weight.

You will also be able to tell if your baby is getting enough breast milk by counting the number of wet and dirty diapers each day. The number of wet and dirty diapers increases at about day 3 or 4 after birth — typically to five or six wet diapers and three dirty diapers each day.

Speaking of dirty diapers: As your milk changes, your baby's poops will too. At first, poops will be black and tarry. Then they'll be greenish to yellowish. Then they will become yellow, loose, and seedy. Around 10 to 15 days after delivery, your baby may poop after every feeding or less often.

**How often should I breastfeed my baby?** Newborn babies breastfeed often, as much as 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. At birth, your baby's tummy holds only about a teaspoon, but it will gradually grow. (See Figure 1 on page 4.) Babies don't often eat at regular times, but your baby will let you know when he or she is hungry. Feed your baby when they show hunger signals, such as:



- restless movement during sleep,
- waking and alertness,
- opening mouth when lips are touched, or licking or smacking lips,
- sucking on fingers or fists,
- rooting or turning their head to search for mother's nipple.

A hungry baby will show signs of hunger **before** starting to cry, and it is reassuring to baby for breastfeeding to begin before they cry. Babies cry for many reasons and hunger is just one. Crying babies may need extra calming before they can successfully latch on to your breast and begin to breastfeed.

By feeding your baby often, your breasts will make more milk. Empty breasts make milk so there is no need to wait for your breasts to “fill up.” Early and frequent breastfeeding is the key to making plenty of milk.

**Can I feed my baby both breast milk and formula?** Feeding baby formula in the first month can make it difficult for your body to make enough breast milk. Each ounce of formula the baby takes is one less ounce of breast milk

your body will make. Also, if you give bottles too soon, baby may prefer the faster flow of milk from the bottle and get frustrated at your breast.

**Does breastfeeding hurt?** Breastfeeding is not supposed to be a painful experience. As with any new skill, there is an adjustment period, so you may have some discomfort in the beginning. But if you experience pain that last more than a few seconds, it is usually a red flag that something is wrong. It also means your baby may not be getting as much milk as they could. WIC (Women, Infants, and Children program) breastfeeding staff can help, as can other lactation support providers. Ask your healthcare provider for info on breastfeeding support in your area, and talk with others who have breastfed — mothers, grandmothers, sisters, friends — who can offer good information and assistance. Visit the Local Resource Directory on the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition website to find local breastfeeding help — <https://ksbreastfeeding.org/local-resources/>

**Will breastfeeding cause my breasts to lose their shape?** Your breasts may look different after you finish breastfeeding, but the change is due to more than just breastfeeding. Pregnancy, from very early on, causes breasts to grow and ligaments supporting the breasts to stretch. These changes take place anyway, whether or not a mom decides to breastfeed. Your breasts will probably return to their normal cup size once you stop breastfeeding. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says that age, gravity, and weight gain are all more likely to cause changes in a woman's breast size than breastfeeding.

**Can I continue breastfeeding if I return to work or school?** Yes! You will want to make a plan. Talk with your boss before you have the baby about your need for time to pump and a private space that is not a bathroom. Find a “breastfeeding-friendly” child care provider near your work or school. You can use a breast pump to collect milk and a “blue ice” cooler bag to store your milk

for your baby while you are at work. Plan to start to pump 1 to 2 weeks before you go back to work to get used to pumping. You will only need about 10 to 12 ounces of milk to take to child care on your first day back. For more tips about safely pumping and storing breast milk, see: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3200.pdf>.

For more information about infant feeding and other topics, contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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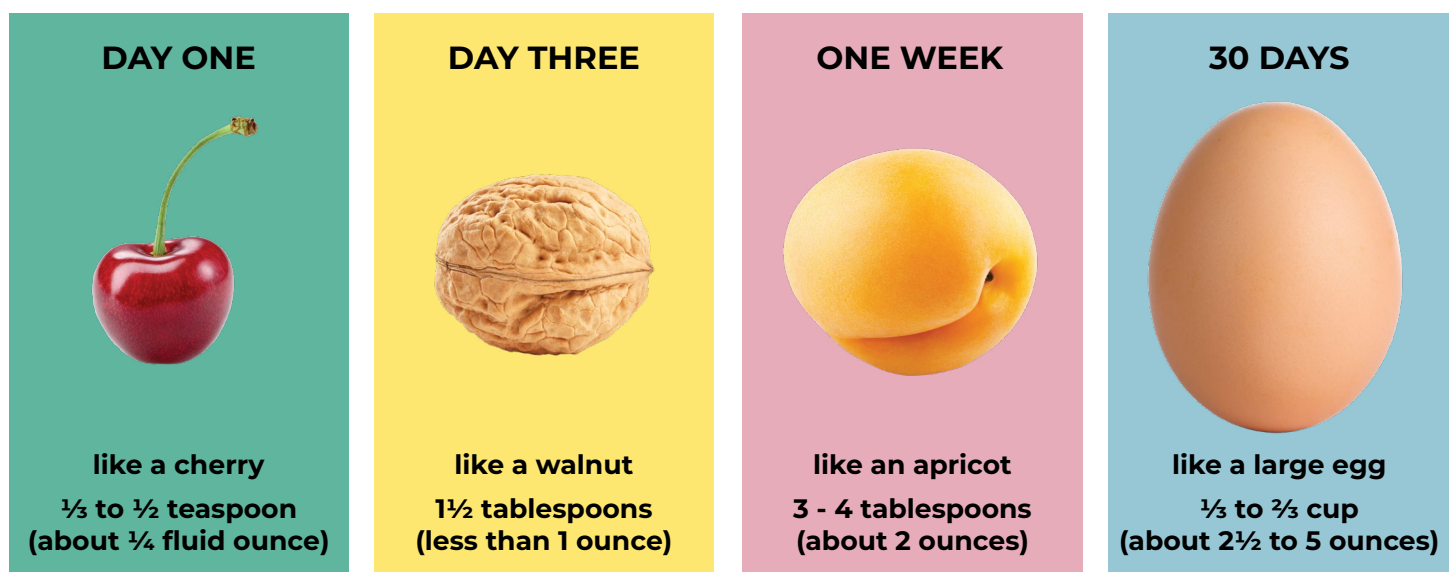
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Figure 1. Newborn Tummy Size



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