

Breast Milk is Best for Premature Babies

Babies born very early usually need to stay in the neonatal intensive care unit. The best food to give your baby is your breast milk. At first your baby may not be strong enough to breastfeed, but you can use a breast pump to collect all the milk your baby needs. Babies can get breast milk from a cotton swab, through a feeding tube that goes from the nose or mouth into the stomach, or from a bottle.

Breast milk is the best kind of food for premature babies because it:

- Is easier to drink than formula
- Can help the brain to grow and develop
- Can prevent serious infections
- Breast milk is a food and a medicine for your premature baby!

How do I make breast milk if my baby is not strong enough to suck on my breasts?

- While your baby is in the hospital, you will need to use a breast pump to get milk out of your breasts.
- Use the breast pump 8 or more times every 24 hours. Make sure to pump at night. The more times you pump each day the more milk you will make for your baby.
- When you visit your baby in the hospital, do “kangaroo” or “skin-to-skin” care. This is when you hold your baby naked with only a diaper on your bare chest. This helps you make more breast milk and is comforting for you and your baby.

Is my milk enough to help my baby grow?

- When babies are born very premature, they may need extra nutrients added to your breast milk. The doctors and nutritionists at your hospital will help decide if and when your baby may need more nutrients.

How do I get help with making breast milk for my baby?

- Making breast milk for a premature baby is hard work but very rewarding!
- Ask your nurse or lactation consultants if you are having difficulty pumping 8 or more times a day.
- Ask friends and family to help you by making meals or snacks, doing chores, helping with other children, or just offering encouragement.

