

Breastfeeding FAQs: Getting Started

Whether you're a new mom or a seasoned parenting pro, breastfeeding often comes with its fair share of questions. Here are some answers to common inquiries that mothers — new and veteran — may have.

When will my milk come in?

During the first few days after the birth of your baby, your body will produce **colostrum**, a sort of pre-milk. For



some women, colostrum is thick and yellowish. For others it is thin and watery. Colostrum contains many protective properties, including antibacterial and immune system boost-

ing substances that are so important to your baby and aren't found in infant formula. The flow of colostrum is very slow, which allows your baby to learn how to nurse and also how to coordinate sucking, breathing, and swallowing. After about 3 to 4 days of nursing, your breasts will start to feel less soft and more firm as your milk changes from colostrum to milk that looks kind of like skim milk. Your milk will be transitional for the first 10 to 14 days, after which it's considered to be mature milk.

During this time, the amount of milk your body produces will increase, responding to your baby's nursing. Your milk supply is determined by the stimulation your body receives. In other words, the more you breastfeed, the more milk your body produces.

Mothers who deliver by Caesarean section (C-section) may find it takes longer for their milk supply to increase.

Sometimes, for no apparent reason, a mother's milk may take longer than a few days to come in. This is perfectly normal and is usually no cause for concern, but make sure to let your doctor know. While babies don't need much more than some colostrum for the first couple days, the doctor may need to make sure the baby is getting enough to eat. It can help to breastfeed more frequently, putting the baby to the breast every 2 to 3 hours.

If your milk still hasn't come in within 72 hours after the birth of your baby, you may want to talk to your doctor about temporarily supplementing with formula (just until your milk supply is up) so that your baby gets enough nutrients and doesn't lose weight unnecessarily.

Don't be alarmed if your baby drops a little weight at first. Most babies typically lose up to 7% of their body weight in the first few days.

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