

# TIPS TO HELP YOU MEET YOUR BREASTFEEDING GOALS



LA LECHE LEAGUE  
CANADA  
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The World Health Organization, UNICEF and the Canadian Pediatric Society all promote the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding, with the addition of solid foods, for two years and beyond. Here are some suggestions that make reaching those breastfeeding goals easier.

## Learn how to hand express

You can begin practicing hand expression at around 37 weeks, unless advised not to by your healthcare provider. Learning how to hand express helps nursing parents become more comfortable with their breasts. You can save small amounts of colostrum to use in the early days with your baby. Having colostrum available is especially helpful if your baby is at risk for low blood sugar. Hand expression can be an amazing tool to use throughout your breastfeeding journey. See [Prenatal Colostrum Expression](#) and [Hand Expression](#).



"The newborn baby has only three demands. They are warmth in the arms of its mother, food from her breast, and security in the knowledge of her presence. Breastfeeding satisfies all three."

(Dr Grantly Dick-Read,  
British obstetrician  
and an advocate of  
natural childbirth)



## Hold your baby a lot, especially skin to skin

Putting your baby skin to skin immediately after the birth, helps regulate your baby's temperature, breathing, heart rate and sugar levels. Research shows that breastfed babies who are held a lot by their mothers gain weight faster in the first week than babies who aren't held a lot. Your baby will nurse more often when held or carried. When your baby is with you, it is easy to feel your sleeping baby start to come awake. You can just shift your baby onto the breast before his eyes are even open. Babies often latch more easily when they are drowsy and relaxed. If your baby is sleeping on your chest, you can lean back like you are watching TV. Have your baby placed between your breasts with his head under your chin and his feet in your belly. See [Skin-to-Skin Care](#).

## Nurse your baby early and often

Breastfeed your baby within the first hour of birth, or as soon after birth as possible. If you cannot be with your baby, hand express your milk to send the signal to your breasts to start making milk. Nurse frequently in the early days and weeks to help your body establish reliable milk production. If nursing is uncomfortable, get help to improve the latch. Your local La Leche League Leader can provide you with information and support. See [Establishing Your Milk Supply](#) and [Positioning and Latching](#).

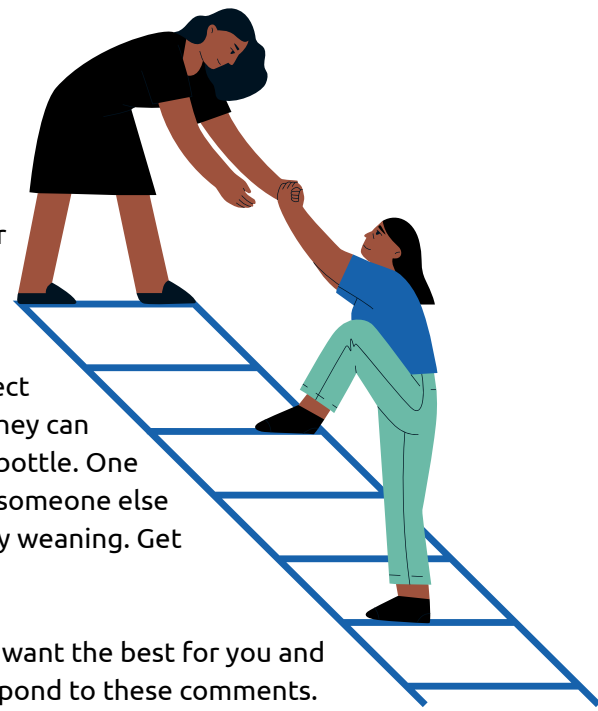


## Allow others to help

Family and friends can help with household chores. They can prepare meals, clean the house, do laundry and go shopping. Let others look after you, so you can look after your baby. They can bring you something to eat or drink, get you an extra pillow, hold your baby while you nap or shower, or just keep you company.

It is important for your baby's father, your partner or grandparents to connect with their baby. They can interact while changing a diaper or at bath time. They can do infant massage or use a baby carrier. They don't need to give the baby a bottle. One of the most common reasons new mothers give for pumping milk is so that someone else can feed the baby with a bottle. Frequent bottles, however, can lead to early weaning. Get breastfeeding well established before thinking about using bottles.

Sometimes those you love will say things that feel judgmental. Usually they want the best for you and don't understand that their words hurt. It can be helpful to learn how to respond to these comments. See [Dealing with Thoughtless Remarks](#) and [How Partners and Supporters Can Help](#) and [Talking to Grandparents](#).



## Limit visitors

Everyone is excited by a new baby and wants to drop by. Having extra people in your space can be exhausting for new parents. Even if you stay in your pyjamas, guests may stay too long. One wise midwife said, "1 visitor per day, for 1 hour, with something for dinner." If they offer to bring you supplies from the store, give them a list. Ask them to unload the dishwasher or do a load of laundry. If you don't feel up to a visit, meet them at the door, take the supplies and trade them a peek at the baby. In a couple of weeks you will feel up to longer visits and then they can come back. Social media gives you the opportunity to send out lots of photos to your circle of friends so they can share in your joy without coming for a visit. See [To New Grandparents: 10 Things You Can Do To Support Breastfeeding](#).



## Create your breastfeeding support network

Breastfeeding is a learned skill. Throughout history and around the world mothers learn to breastfeed by watching others feed their babies and by getting support from those experienced in nursing. Think of people you know who have breastfed successfully. They may not be your closest friends or family members. Contact them while you are pregnant and ask if you can call them for support when you need it. [La Leche League Leaders and Groups](#) are a great place to learn about breastfeeding and find people to support you. See [Finding Your "Village"](#), [Story: Mothering Journey](#) and [La Leche League Canada - Who We Are and What We Do](#).





## Learn about normal baby behaviour and weight gain

Consider attending La Leche League Meetings while pregnant. You can also visit family or friends who are nursing young babies. It's important to see other babies so you know what's normal.

- Babies cry to communicate with you.
- They like to be held and may cry when put down.
- Most want to sleep near their parents.
- Babies need to breastfeed around the clock and usually not at set intervals.
- Lots of things can upset them, like going to sleep, and waking up, being lonely, cold, hot, wet, and most often, hungry.
- Babies pee and poop frequently. After the first few days, you can expect six wet diapers and 3-5 yellow stools in 24 hours.



It's also important to know what abnormal baby behaviour is. Sometimes talking things through with an experienced breastfeeding supporter is better than trying to problem solve using books or the internet. Contact a La Leche League Leader if you have questions. See [\*How to Know Your Baby is Getting Enough Milk\*](#), [\*Growth Spurts and Frequent-Feeding Days\*](#), [\*Newborn Baby Hands\*](#) and [\*The Sounds of Breastfeeding\*](#).



## Trust your instincts and your baby's instincts

You know your baby best. Trust yourself. You are doing a good job. You and your baby will learn about life together. It may take some time to figure it out, but your baby will tell you what she needs. When in doubt, offer your breast. Babies are not robots. Even though your baby fed an hour ago, she may want to feed again. That's okay. There are no right answers and sometimes the books, Instagram influencers and websites are wrong. Come to a [La Leche League meeting](#) and talk with other mothers. See [\*Story: Baby-led Latching\*](#) and [\*The First Hours After Birth - The Nine Instinctive Stages\*](#).



## Use a baby carrier

Lots of things can be done with a baby in a carrier. Your baby will be happy to be close to you and you will have a hand (or two) free to get something done. See Health Canada's "[Baby sling and carrier safety](#)" for important safety information.



## Set up a 'nursing nest'

It is helpful to create yourself a nursing nest spot (or two) for feedings. Then you'll have everything you might want within arm's reach once your baby is latched. If you have two floors, consider creating two nursing nests.

Things to have on hand are:

- something to drink.
- something to eat.
- your phone.
- something to read, such as *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*.
- the TV remote.
- pillows or blankets to support your arms or your baby.
- a towel, receiving blanket or burp cloth for spit-ups or leaking milk.
- diaper change mat, diapers and wipes.
- a blanket to cover you and baby if you want to lie skin to skin after nursing.
- a footstool or sofa with foot support.

See [Preparing to Breastfeed](#) with ideas for more things you might want to consider while you are pregnant.

## Limit use of artificial nipples

Limit the use of bottles and pacifiers. Some babies can go back and forth between the breast and an artificial nipple with no problems. However, research has shown that getting sucking needs met somewhere other than the breast is a risk factor for early weaning. If you do choose to use artificial nipples, such as pacifiers, it is important to use them in such a way that they do not interfere with breastfeeding. See [How to Protect Breastfeeding While Supplementing](#).



## Practice breastfeeding in public

You may not want to breastfeed in public places in the early weeks while you and baby are getting the hang of it. Eventually you will want to leave the house. Knowing that you can feed your baby anywhere anytime makes life easier. Lots of mothers have their first experience breastfeeding outside of their own family circle while attending a [La Leche League Group meeting](#). You can also practice breastfeeding in front of a mirror. See [Story: My First La Leche League Meeting](#).

## Remember to rest

Your body will need time to recover from birth. This doesn't mean don't move. Take things slow and easy. You will find you are able to do a little bit more each day. Your speed of recovery may not be the same as your best friend's was. That is okay; listen to your body. As much as possible try to rest when your baby rests. This can be very difficult to do. When your baby sleeps may seem like the only time to get anything else done. Carrying your baby in a baby carrier while he's awake can allow you to do some chores. Then when he wants to sleep, you can sleep too. It can be very helpful to learn how to nurse lying down. It is important to learn how to sleep safely beside your baby, in case you fall asleep. See [Safe Sleep Seven](#) and [Positioning and Latching](#).

## Be kind to yourself

Try to eat healthy foods, go for a walk or dance around the house with your baby in a carrier or sling. Sleep when you can. Find ways to laugh. Keep life as simple as possible. Easy meals and some clean clothes are reasonable goals at this time. Your life probably will not look like a magazine photo spread or TV show. Your baby won't care as long as he's with you. Looking after a baby is full-time work!

