

Breastfeeding Your Preterm Baby at Home

Your baby's home care plan

As we prepare you and your baby for discharge, we will work with you to create your baby's home care plan. You may talk with your baby's care providers, nurses, feeding therapists, nutritionists, breastfeeding resource nurses, and lactation consultants. You have many resources to help you create a plan that you feel comfortable and confident about!

Even if you started breastfeeding your baby in the hospital, you will need to be patient with yourself and your baby when you start to breastfeed at home. A full-term baby may nurse for 20 to 30 minutes, but a preterm baby may not have the energy to nurse that long.

You can call a NICU lactation consultant at 206.598.4628 if you have questions. Be sure to get the support you need.

What to Do

- Feed your baby when you see early “feeding cues” such as fluttering eyelids, making noises, moving arms and legs, and sucking motions.
- Offer your breast every time your baby is hungry, and give your baby time to latch on. Do this at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.
- Read your discharge sheet. Your NICU doctor may have advised you to supplement with pumped breast milk or formula if your baby:
 - Nurses less than 10 to 15 minutes
 - Does not latch on after 5 minutes of trying
 - Shows signs of stress, such as wrinkling the brow, stretching hands (this is a sign to stop), or fussing at the breast



Be patient with yourself and your baby as you start to breastfeed at home.

- You should be able to breastfeed longer and supplement less as your baby grows. Keep supplementing until your baby is nursing at each breast for 15 to 20 minutes and is gaining weight well.
- Keep pumping to maintain your milk supply, even if you supplement. Pump after each feeding, or 8 times in 24 hours, until your baby is nursing at each breast for 15 to 20 minutes and is gaining weight well.

Questions?

If you do not understand something, please ask questions. Every question you ask is important!

- Ask any care provider when you do not understand a medical term.
- Ask for more information when you do not understand a treatment or why it needs to be done. Ask about possible side effects.
- Keep asking questions until you feel you understand what you need to know.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit:
206.598.4606