

Congratulations on the Birth of Your Baby!

Read this handout before or soon after the birth of your baby.

Your baby needs your milk! Our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) team and Lactation Services encourage you to provide breast milk for your baby.

To Do

- Call your health insurance company to ask if your healthcare plan will pay for you to buy or rent a hospital-grade breast pump.

Breast Milk Is Special

All babies need mother's milk for good health. And, the longer you breastfeed, the more you protect your baby's health. For preterm or hospitalized babies, human milk is even more important.

When You Have a Preterm Baby

Do you know that breast milk from mothers with preterm babies is different from breast milk from mothers who deliver at term? Preterm mother's milk has more:

- Protein
- Certain minerals
- Anti-infection properties
- Special factors that help your preterm baby's immature immune system



Soon after your baby's birth, we will teach you how to use a hospital-grade breast pump. The milk you collect will be given to your baby in the NICU.

Your preterm baby will have these benefits from receiving your milk:

- Lower risk of infection
- Lower risk of allergy
- Lower risk of *necrotizing enterocolitis* (NEC), an intestinal infection
- Better feeding tolerance
- Better eye development
- Better brain development and higher IQ (*intelligence quotient*)
- Lower risk of *respiratory syncytial virus* (RSV), which infects the lungs and breathing passages

Getting Started

You can breastfeed your hospitalized or preterm baby, but the way you get started will be different for a while.

- Some **full-term hospitalized babies** can breastfeed right away, but many will not be ready.
- For **preterm infants**, it may be many days or weeks until their bodies are strong or mature enough to breastfeed well.

Soon after your baby's birth, you will be taught how to collect your milk by hand and with a hospital-grade electric breast pump. Learning to *express* (release) your milk with a pump like this helps you build and maintain your milk supply while your baby is small. In the NICU, your baby will be fed the milk you collect.

Medicines

Be sure to tell your lactation consultant or doctor about any medicines you are taking while providing breast milk for your baby. Over-the-counter medicines, prescription medicines, and other drugs can get into your breast milk.

Most medicines will not cause problems for your growing baby. But, it is still best to review them with your healthcare team.

Common Question

Can my body make milk even though my baby was born early?

Yes. Your breasts can begin to produce milk by 22 weeks gestation.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Lactation Services:
206.598.4628

Weekdays: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Weekends and holidays:
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.