

BREASTFEEDING YOUR NEWBORN: HOW TO WAKE YOUR SLEEPY BABY

Many newborns are sleepy during the first few days of life, but it is important for babies to breastfeed often during this time. Here are some tips to help you wake your sleepy baby.



It makes sense that your baby would be sleepy in the first days of life. Birth was tiring for both of you! It is still important for your baby to nurse often during this time for many reasons:

- Your newborn's tummy is small. When your baby is three to four days old, her stomach is the size of a ping-pong ball. The tummy doesn't hold much so it needs to be filled often.
- Breast milk is much easier for your baby to digest than formula, so your baby's tummy will empty faster. This means less gas and constipation, but it also means your baby needs to eat often.

- The best way to learn any skill is with practice. Breastfeeding is no exception.
- How often the baby breastfeeds determines how much milk you will make for many months to come, so you want your baby to nurse often.
- Many newborns have jaundice and look slightly yellow at birth. Breastfeeding often can help make this go away faster.

How can you wake up your baby to breastfeed?

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin. Place your baby, tummy down, on your bare chest. Place a light blanket over both of you, but don't cover your baby's head. Stay like this for 20-30 minutes.
- During skin-to-skin, talk and sing to your baby.
- After skin-to-skin, hold your baby so he/she can see your face. Gently massage your baby's chest, shoulders, arms and legs and up and down the spine. Gently stroke your baby from nose to chin and around the mouth.
- Hold your baby on your lap facing you. Support her head and gently lower her down and up like she's doing a "sit-up" Do this a few times.

What if your baby starts to fall asleep while feeding?

- Squeeze your breast when your baby pauses in the sucking rhythm (not just sipping to swallow milk).
- Stroke your baby under the chin. Gently move his arms and legs around while talking to him.
- Break suction, burp your baby and switch him/her to the other breast. Continue to switch breasts until your baby is no longer showing signs of hunger. You may have to do this a lot during the first few days of breastfeeding.
- Check/change your baby's diaper when switching from one breast to the other.
- Gently massage the top of your baby's head in small circles while he nurses.
- Stroke the baby's foot or cheek while saying his name.
- Dim the lights. Bright lights will make your baby close his/her eyes.
- If nothing else works, wipe your baby's face with a cool, damp cloth.

Your health and your ability to take care of your baby can be seriously affected by violence or abuse. If you are hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or spouse, there is help. Call the National domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-7233 or visit thehotline.org.