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Dr. Fitch's Breast Feeding Essentials

It's a great idea to breast feed. Babies who are breast fed have fewer infections and allergies during the first year of life. Breast milk doesn't cost anything. It is ready anytime. However, for a variety of reasons, some women are unable to nurse or choose not to. Fortunately, there are currently excellent formulas on the market to choose from. I would be happy to discuss with you which formula would best meet your baby's particular needs.

How do I get started?

It's good to breast feed soon after the baby is born. Here are some things to remember:

- Start by getting comfortable with yourself. Be sure to get a drink of water, milk or juice if you are thirsty.
- Use pillows for support.
- Hold your baby tucked in very close to your body.
- Support your baby well.
- It is important to get the baby to open his or her mouth wide. Once the mouth is open wide, put in as much of the dark area around the nipple (the areola) as you can.
- Relax.

Nurse your baby whenever your baby cries or seems hungry. Your baby will probably nurse every 2 hours or so at first. It's a good idea to nurse at least 7-8 times a day for the first couple of weeks until your baby is back to birth weight and has established his or her own schedule. We will discuss this further in the hospital and at the first office visit.

How long should I feed the baby?

Nurse your baby 10-15 minutes on the first breast and as long as he or she wants on the second. Your goal at first is to have your baby nurse for a total of about 20-30 minutes total at each feeding. Remember to change the breast you start with each time. Each baby is different. Some babies are efficient and will nurse 5-10 minutes total while others may take 20 minutes on each side. Again, we'll discuss this at your first office visit.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough?

The more you nurse, the more breast milk you make. But because you can't see how much breast milk a baby is drinking, many women worry their baby is not getting enough.

You can be sure that your baby is getting what he or she needs if:

- Your baby is gaining weight.
- Your newborn has 6 or more wet diapers a day and at least 1-2 bowel movements a day. After nursing is established your baby should be wet most changes but may only have dirty diapers every other day or even once every 3-4 days.