



# BABY STEPS

## Breastfeeding

### Breast milk: The perfect food

Breast milk is amazing food. It is custom-made to help your baby grow strong and healthy. It even changes when your baby's needs change! Since it's custom-made for your baby, it is easy to digest. Breastfeeding (also called nursing) helps build a special bond between mother and baby.

### Babies who breastfeed may:

- Get sick less often and for a shorter time
- Have fewer ear infections
- Be less likely to get overweight
- Have less chance of getting chronic diseases, like asthma and childhood diabetes

### Benefits for the parents include:

#### Convenience

Breast milk is always ready. No need to boil bottles or warm up formula. This is great at night, especially if you learn to nurse while lying down. There is also less stuff to take with you when you leave the house with your baby!

#### Saving money

Baby formula can be very expensive.

#### Rest

Breastfeeding allows the mom to slow down and relax.

#### Weight loss

Moms who nurse usually lose their pregnancy weight faster.

#### Medical benefits

Breastfeeding reduces a woman's chance of getting certain diseases, like breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and diabetes.

Breastfeeding is one of the most natural things in the world, once you learn how to do it! Sometimes it can be hard to get started. This is because many women do not have the information and support they need.



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## Nurse, nurse, nurse

The more you nurse, the more milk you will make. Nurse as soon as you can after your baby is born. For the first few days, you will make a thick, yellow milk called colostrum. This is full of antibodies that help keep your baby from getting sick (breastfeeding helpers call it “liquid gold!”). That’s really ALL a baby needs until your milk comes in. If your baby is not getting enough milk, it is probably because she isn’t feeding properly. If so, get help right away from a breastfeeding helper.

## Get a breastfeeding helper

All over the world, women learn how to nurse from experienced moms. Here in the United States, we may not always have family or friends nearby to help us out. Luckily, we have breastfeeding helpers instead! These are professionals who are trained to help moms breastfeed.

A breastfeeding helper will help you learn how to position your baby and get the baby to feed properly. Talk to a breast-feeding helper while you are pregnant, and ask her to come to the hospital after your baby is born. You should also take a breastfeeding class during your pregnancy.

You can call Alliance Health Programs at **510-747-4577** to find out how to contact a breastfeeding helper or to sign up for a class. We support breastfeeding moms and we will pay for these services.

## Get a breast pump

If you plan to go to work or school, you may want to pump milk for your baby. If you need a breast pump, the Alliance will pay for one. For more information, call Alliance Health Programs at **510-747-4577**.

## Support a breastfeeding mom

When you see a mom nursing her baby in the mall or any other public place, smile and tell her what a great job she’s doing.

If a friend or relative is nursing a newborn baby, help out by dropping off meals or offering to babysit her older kids.

## Be confident

Remember that formula companies want you to buy formula. That’s why they give free samples! Almost any mom CAN breastfeed, with the right help and education. Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t do it!

Women who are HIV positive or women who use certain drugs should not breastfeed. The HIV virus and some drugs can be passed on to the baby. You should check with your doctor if you have any concerns or are on any medications.

You know those pictures of mothers nursing their babies, gazing lovingly into their eyes and smiling peacefully? You may not get that feeling right away. It takes a bit of work to get there, but when you do, it is a beautiful thing!



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