



## Patient Information

### FEEDING GUIDELINES FOR YOUR SMALL OR PRETERM BABY (34-37 weeks)

Babies who are small or born a few weeks early tend to be sleepy. Some babies start out as eager feeders but may have a weak suck and don't always drink enough milk. Others fall asleep at the breast before they have enough to drink. This is why they may not gain enough weight.

Many babies who are small or born a little early need extra time to practice breastfeeding. Have your bedside nurse, lactation consultant or healthcare provider watch you feed your baby while you are still in hospital. Continue to work closely with your health care provider to be certain that you and your baby are doing well.

#### How to Help your Baby Learn to Breastfeed:

- Keep your baby skin-to-skin with you as much as possible while you are awake
- Feed your baby at least 8 times in 24 hours
- Watch for hunger cues such as:
  - Sucking or tongue movements
  - Hands to mouth
  - Restlessness
- Express a drop of breastmilk on your nipple to help your baby go to the breast
- Use massage and/or breast compression to help milk flow while baby is latched
- When your baby is breastfeeding well you will:
  - See active sucking movements
  - Hear swallowing with every one or two sucks
  - Feel a tug at the breast
  - See enough wet and dirty diapers for that day of life
- Keep a record of each feed and all wet and dirty diapers and show this to your health care provider.

#### What to do When your Baby Needs Help with Breastfeeding:

- You may need to wake your baby to make sure he is feeding **at least 8 times** in 24 hours
- Your small or preterm baby **may need to be supplemented** if:
  - Your baby does not drink well at the breast at every feeding
  - Your baby often falls asleep when breastfeeding
  - Your baby is fussy or shows hunger cues after breastfeeding
  - Your baby is not having enough wet and dirty diapers
- If your baby needs a supplement, give your baby:
  - Your fresh breastmilk that you have hand expressed or pumped
  - Your frozen breastmilk that has been thawed
  - If you do not have enough breastmilk:
    - Pasteurized donor milk from a human milk bank
    - Store bought infant formula

**Did you know? You can buy pasteurized human milk from the NorthernStar Mothers Milk bank in Calgary. For more information visit:**

**<http://northernstarmilkbank.ca/>**

- Talk with your health care provider about the different ways you can give the supplement to your baby
- Your baby should be seen by your health care provider within **48 hours** of hospital discharge
- Be sure to have your baby's **weight checked weekly** or at least as often as advised to do so

**Continue to work with your health care provider or someone skilled with helping breastfeeding mothers while your baby is being supplemented.**

**Always consult with your health care provider before reducing the amount of supplement that your baby is getting.**

### **Establishing your Milk Supply**

If your small or preterm baby is not able to fully feed at the breast, you will need to establish your milk supply by hand expressing and/or pumping.

To get off to a good start:

- Provide skin-to-skin contact with your baby as often as possible
- Hand express or pump your breastmilk early, ideally within the first hour of birth but if that is not possible, try within 6 hours
- Breastfeed or remove breastmilk by hand expressing or pumping at least 8 times in 24 hours, including at least once at night
- Breastfeed your baby first, then hand express or pump your breastmilk to give to your baby after
- If you are pumping, use a hospital grade double electric pump if possible
- See the handouts *Guidelines for Pumping, Storage and Use of Breastmilk* and *Building your Milk Supply* for more information

### **References:**

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. (2016). *ABM Clinical Protocol #10: Breastfeeding the Late Preterm (34-36 6/7 Weeks of Gestation) and Early Term Infants (37-38 6/7 Weeks of Gestation)*, Second Revision 2016. Retrieved from <https://abm.memberclicks.net/assets/DOCUMENTS/PROTOCOLS/10-breastfeeding-the-late-pre-term-infant-protocol-english.pdf>

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