

Preparing For Breastfeeding

Your Body is already doing everything that needs to be done. By the time you are several months pregnant, you're ready to make milk and your breasts contain colostrum, the "pre-milk" that your baby gets in the first few days after birth. "Toughening" your nipples won't help soreness. Learning how to hold your baby for nursing will. Nipples are nothing more than a "target" to help a baby know where to nurse; all shapes and sizes work. If your nipples are the kind that never stand out, they may be a bit confusing for your baby at first, so ask about ways to encourage "shy" nipples. Other than that, treat your breasts and nipples just the way you treat the backs of your knees, but without the soap. The little bumps on the darker area around your nipple produce a cleanser/moisturizer that does all the work for you. If you have very dry skin, Lansinoh®, a very pure lanolin especially for nipples, may be helpful.

Your Mind needs more preparation than your body. Nursing is learned, not instinctive, and most mothers in this country have had little chance to learn. Try to go to at least one La Leche League meeting before your baby is born. You'll see how other mothers handle their nurslings, have a chance to hear and ask questions, and meet local breastfeeding specialists. Some good books on breastfeeding are:

- *Dr. Jack Newman's Guide to Breastfeeding* (available through most bookstores)
- *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* (available through La Leche League and most bookstores)
- *Bestfeeding: Getting Breastfeeding Right for You* (La Leche League and most bookstores)

Buy or borrow one of them, and become familiar with it. Avoid all formula company information! It may sound supportive, but it's designed to help breastfeeding fail.

Your Childbirth Classes are important. Breastfeeding is a basic, powerful biological system, and you can nurse no matter what kind of start you and your baby have. But it's easiest when your baby is born without drugs in her system, and when she has unbroken contact with you until after her first nursing. Most alert babies nurse within the first hour, and that first nursing may be a very long one. Take your time and enjoy each other. There's plenty of time for weighing and measuring afterwards.

Your Wardrobe already exists. Most mothers just wear their regular two-piece outfits and pull the top up on one side to nurse. The baby's body covers everything that the top doesn't cover. A T-shirt or button-front nightgown works well at night. A bra is optional at all times of your life, and doesn't prevent sagging. If you want to wear one, make it comfortably loose so that it gives you easy access for nursing. Some stretchy ones simply pull up. Others have a nursing flap. If you're an unusual size, call La Leche League for good sources. In all bras and tops, you'll find cotton far more comfortable than synthetics. Sections of cloth diaper or diaper liners folded around layered toilet paper make inexpensive breast pads for the early weeks, although most women never use pads at all.

Other Equipment isn't necessary. You've got what it takes!