



Breastfeeding FAQs

The Breastfeeding Decision

Pregnancy is an equally exciting and stressful time. In addition to the physical and emotional changes you will experience, there are many important decisions to make, including how to feed your baby. To help you make the best choice for you and your family, we've answered some basic questions new mothers ask.

What are the benefits of breastfeeding for my baby?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding as the healthiest option for many reasons, including:

- Improved mother-baby bonding
- Improved brain development
- Fewer infections, like stomach viruses, colds and ear infections
- Decreased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Better digestion
- Decreased rate of diabetes, obesity, allergies, asthma and leukemia

What are the benefits of breastfeeding for me?

- Reduced blood loss after delivery
- Easier weight loss after delivery
- Decreased rate of breast and ovarian cancers, Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure
- Decreased risk of osteoporosis

Is breastfeeding difficult?

Babies are born with the ability to breastfeed and can do so with minimal assistance, if given time and patience. However, challenges may arise if your baby was born early or you have certain health problems. Penn State Health offers lots of breastfeeding support from its skilled nursing staff and highly trained **International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants** (IBCLCs), both during the hospital stay and once you are at home.

How soon should I start breastfeeding?

Offering your baby the opportunity to breastfeed immediately after birth is key to getting off to a good start. Fortunately, the only thing you need to do is place your baby directly on your chest, skin-to-skin, and let them remain there, uninterrupted, until the first feeding is completed. It's normal for this first feeding to take an hour or more since learning to latch, suck, swallow and breathe is a complex skill that takes time to figure out.

How does skin-to-skin contact help with breastfeeding?

Time spent holding your baby directly skin-to-skin helps regulate your baby's heart rate, temperature and breathing. It also stabilizes your baby's blood sugar and helps with breastfeeding because it can stimulate your baby's feeding reflexes, guiding your baby to move toward your breast. Skin-to-skin contact should only be done when you are fully awake. If you are tired, it is best to place your baby safely in a bassinet on their back.

How long should I breastfeed?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of your baby's life, with continued breastfeeding, along with the introduction of nutritious complementary foods, for one year or longer.

How do I get started?

During your prenatal appointments, you will receive literature that explains how to start breastfeeding and what to expect as you and your baby progress. Your doctor's office can put you in touch with a lactation consultant to talk with you as well.

While in the hospital to deliver your baby, a lactation consultant is available to visit with you and your baby to ensure you are comfortable and that your baby is receiving the nutrition they need. Your bedside nurse also is trained to support breastfeeding.

Easy-to-use app includes breastfeeding tracker

myYoMingo is an easy-to-use app that provides tools and expert advice, from pregnancy to your baby's first birthday, and includes a Baby Breastfeeding Tracker. Get answers, whenever and wherever you need them, when you download myYoMingo to your mobile device.



How can I learn more?

Follow this QR code for more information on breastfeeding and a list of support groups and events near you. Once you are home, Penn State Health offers ongoing breastfeeding assistance through outpatient lactation services and support groups in Hampden, Hershey and Reading.

Penn State Health Hampden Medical Center

Call 717-981-8237 for phone support or to schedule an outpatient visit.

Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State Health Children's Hospital

Call 717-531-MILK (6455) for phone support.
Call 717-531-7300 to schedule an outpatient visit.

Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center

Call 484-955-5524 or 610-217-1728 for phone support.

Call 610-378-2068 to schedule a prenatal consult.

pennstatehealth.org/breastfeeding



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