



ILCA's INSIDE TRACK

a resource for breastfeeding mothers

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Breastfeeding after Weight Loss Surgery

By Phyllis Kombol, RNC, MSN, IBCLC

You might wonder how weight loss surgery (like gastric bypass) can affect you and your baby while you are pregnant and while you breastfeed. Here are some things to think about:

Your life and your baby's life can depend on this. . . .

Tell all the people on your health care team that you have had weight loss surgery . . . even if they don't ask. Better yet: give a written copy of your surgery report to each person who works with you and your baby.

Getting Pregnant

It may be easier to get pregnant after you have lost about 50 pounds. If you can, wait until your weight loss is mostly done before getting pregnant. This will be about 18 months after your surgery.

Your weight loss might slow down or even stop while you are pregnant. This is okay because you will need to focus on eating all that your baby needs to grow and be healthy. Follow the advice of your doctor and dietician about what to eat and what extra nutrients you might need. Plan to have blood tests to check your nutrient and vitamin levels.

Get Help With Breastfeeding

Most women can breastfeed after this surgery, and their babies grow well! When your baby is born, ask to see a lactation consultant (LC) in the hospital. LCs can help you know when your baby

is feeding well. You'll learn to tell if your baby is getting enough milk.

Schedule a follow-up visit with the LC and baby doctor within 2 weeks of the birth. They will weigh your baby and watch your baby feed. They will give you helpful ideas and make sure your baby is feeding well. If you're having problems, they will help you fix them.

Will I Make Enough Milk for My Baby?

Weight loss surgery itself does not always change how much milk you can make. If you needed the surgery because hormone problems made you gain weight, the same hormone problems could affect your pregnancy and breastfeeding. If your baby seems to need more milk than you are making, talk to your doctor about your hormone levels, because fixing them might help you make plenty of milk.

IBCLC = International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, sometimes called "LC"

Will My Milk Be Good?

Yes, your milk will be great for your baby! Your milk has many special nutrients and things that are not in any formula. You may need extra vitamin B12, especially if you had a bypass type of surgery.

Will I Have to Eat Differently?

The surgery reduced the amount you can eat at one time, so choose to eat very healthy foods to



stay strong and well. Keep taking your extra vitamins and minerals, like vitamin D, vitamin B12, folic acid, iron, and calcium. Be sure you eat enough protein, too. Ask your doctor to check your blood to be sure you are absorbing enough of the vitamins, minerals, and protein.

How Will I Know My Baby Is Growing Well?

Keep track of how often and how well your baby breastfeeds. Count how many times your baby wets and stools each day. Your LC can help you tell if your baby is feeding well and growing well.

Take your baby to the doctor for normal check-ups. The doctor will help you watch your baby for signs of good growth, weight gain, and development.

Take your baby to the doctor to be checked if:

- Baby is not breastfeeding well, or breastfeeding hurts.
- Baby is fussy or never seems relaxed after feeding.
- Baby is not stooling at least 3 times each day in the first month.
- Baby has skin problems, rashes, or is sick.

Remember . . .

- Breastfeed your baby often to help your body make lots of milk.
- Eat healthy foods to keep you and your baby strong and well.
- Take your supplements: vitamins, calcium, protein, and iron.
- Have blood tests to check that your body is keeping enough of the most important nutrients.
- Watch your baby's health and growth by getting regular check-ups.

Most important of all, your milk is the best gift you can give your baby!