



ILCA's INSIDE TRACK

a resource for breastfeeding mothers

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Bringing Your Premature or Ill Breastfeeding Baby Home

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If your baby is born early or is ill, he may start life in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of your hospital. He may stay only a day or two. Or he may stay a few weeks or even months. Until he is able to breastfeed well, you will be expressing and storing milk. Once your baby starts to breastfeed, you will want to do it often. This will give him a lot of practice before going home. You will also want to continue to express your milk after each feed while your baby is learning to breastfeed. The lactation consultant will help you to know when you can stop expressing milk.

In the hospital, before your baby goes home

- Try to be at the hospital as much as you can so you can breastfeed often.
- The more your baby practices, the faster he will learn to feed without any help or extra milk.
- Ask the staff about your baby's feeding routine when you go home.

After your baby goes home

- He may continue to need extra milk until he learns to breastfeed well.
- Continue to feed your baby the same way he fed in the hospital for the first few days at home.
- Make feeding changes slowly.
- Continue expressing your milk after feedings.
- Continue to hold your baby skin to skin often.

Gradually make feeding changes

- For example: If your baby is breastfeeding 3 times per day and fed another way 5 times

per day, your first change might be to breastfeed 4 times per day and another way 4 times per day.

- Continue to slowly increase the number of times your baby breastfeeds.
- Gradually reduce the number of times you give expressed breast milk.
- If your baby has been breastfeeding at each feeding and is also taking some extra milk with each feed, slowly reduce the amount of extra milk you give after the feed.

Gradually decrease your pumping

- Keep pumping until your baby is no longer given any extra milk.
- Try to pump often enough so you can give the baby your milk when he needs extra milk.
- Your baby's doctor or lactation consultant will help you to slowly reduce the number of times you pump each day.
- You can stop 1 or 2 of your pumps at first. Then, after a few days, you can stop another 1 or 2 pumps.
- Do not keep dropping the number of times you pump if you feel engorged (breasts feel hard and painful) at any time.
- It is important not to stop pumping all at once.
- As you cut out pumps, continue to get your baby weighed weekly.
- Your baby should keep gaining weight well before you stop pumping.
- Continue to change the feedings slowly. Make changes only if your baby has enough wet or soiled diapers and is growing well.
- Your baby should have at least 5 or 6 sopping wet diapers each day.



- Your baby should make at least as many poops each day as when he was in the hospital.
- Your baby's doctor or nurse will tell you if the baby is growing well.
- If your baby is growing well, that means he is getting enough milk.

- Call your baby's nurse, doctor, or lactation consultant if you have ANY questions about
 1. When to change your pattern of feedings.
 2. If your baby is getting enough milk.
 3. When to change your pattern of pumping.

Follow-up care

- Take your baby to his doctor or nurse for all his appointments.
- Remind your baby's nurse or doctor that you are working toward full breastfeeding.
- Your baby may need to be weighed often to be sure he is feeding well.
- Call your lactation consultant anytime you are concerned about breastfeeding.

Signs your baby may not be getting enough milk:

- **Your baby will not wake up to feed.**
- **Your baby will not stop crying.**
- **Your baby is not making enough wet or poopy diapers.**

Call your baby's doctor right away if he has any of these signs.

Find Help Fast

An IBCLC is an "International Board Certified Lactation Consultant": someone with special training to help breastfeeding families. Go to "Find a Lactation Consultant" at www.ilca.org, to locate a lactation consultant in your area. You can also ask your doctor or a nurse at your hospital.

Your local lactation consultant: