

*North Carolina Women's Hospital*  
**Breastfeeding:**  
**A Healthy Start for You and Your Baby**

When you are pregnant you make many decisions about yourself and your baby. It is important to consider the choices for feeding your baby and find the one that's best for both of you. More and more women in this country are choosing to breastfeed. Studies show breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for most babies.

**Why breastfeed your baby?**

Breastfeeding is healthy for babies because breast milk has all the nutrients a baby needs to grow well. When you breastfeed, your baby is less likely to have allergies, ear infections or other illnesses. The baby is also less likely to have problems with weight, tooth decay, diarrhea, and constipation. Breastfed babies usually spit up less often than babies who are fed formula. Studies also show that mother's milk helps with babies' brain development.

**Is breastfeeding healthy for mothers?**

Breastfeeding is healthy for mothers because it helps the uterus, or womb, return to normal size quickly after the baby is born. It may help you with weight loss and may protect against several illnesses, such as some cancers and osteoporosis, which is thinning of bones. The longer a woman breastfeeds the more likely she is to be protected from developing these problems in later life.

**What are common questions and concerns that you may have about breastfeeding?**

- **Can I make enough milk for my baby?** Yes. Your breasts make milk whether you breastfeed or not. As long as your baby nurses long enough and often enough, your body will produce the right amount of milk for your baby. Mothers can even make enough milk for twins.
- **How often will I need to breastfeed my baby?** Most newborns need to feed for about 30 minutes every 2 ½ - 3 hours.
- **Can I still breastfeed if I need to be away from my baby?** Yes. After your baby is a few weeks old, someone else can give the baby your expressed milk or formula in a bottle if you need to be away from the baby at feeding time.
- **What can I do if I feel embarrassed?** There are several ways to breastfeed without showing your breasts. Many mothers go into another room to nurse privately. You can plan to be at home when it is time to feed your baby. Some mothers pump extra milk and

feed it to their babies in a bottle when they are away from the home. There are also ways to cover yourself and the baby so that no one can see your breast.

- **Does breastfeeding hurt?** When your baby is breastfeeding correctly, it does not hurt. If your nipples or breasts become sore, get help from a lactation consultant, your provider or clinic, or someone at the WIC office.
- **How long should I breastfeed?** Each mother and baby are different, and any amount of breastfeeding is good for both of you. Babies need nothing but your breast milk for the first 6 months. At 6 months they are ready to add some solid foods while they continue breastfeeding. If you stop breastfeeding before your baby is one year old, you need to talk to the baby's doctor about what kind of formula to use.

### **Where can I get help with breastfeeding after my baby is born?**

- Most clinics and WIC offices have someone who specializes in helping mothers with breastfeeding. While you are still pregnant find out who that person is.
- The nurses in the hospital are very experienced in helping mothers with breastfeeding.
- Lactation Consultants are professionals specially trained to help breastfeeding mothers and babies. They can help you if your baby or you are having problems.
- Once you are home from the hospital you can either call the UNC Breastfeeding Warmline to talk to a Lactation Consultant or use your clinic resources if you have questions or need help with breastfeeding.
- The Lactation Consultants from the hospital can arrange to see you in the UNC OB clinic.

**Lactation Services  
N.C. Women's Hospital  
U.N.C. Healthcare  
Breastfeeding Warmline:  
919-966-4148 (local)  
866-428-5608 (toll free)**

*Approved by NC Women's Hospital Patient Education Committee, January 20, 2003*