



Breastfeeding-Mother and Baby Learning to Nurse

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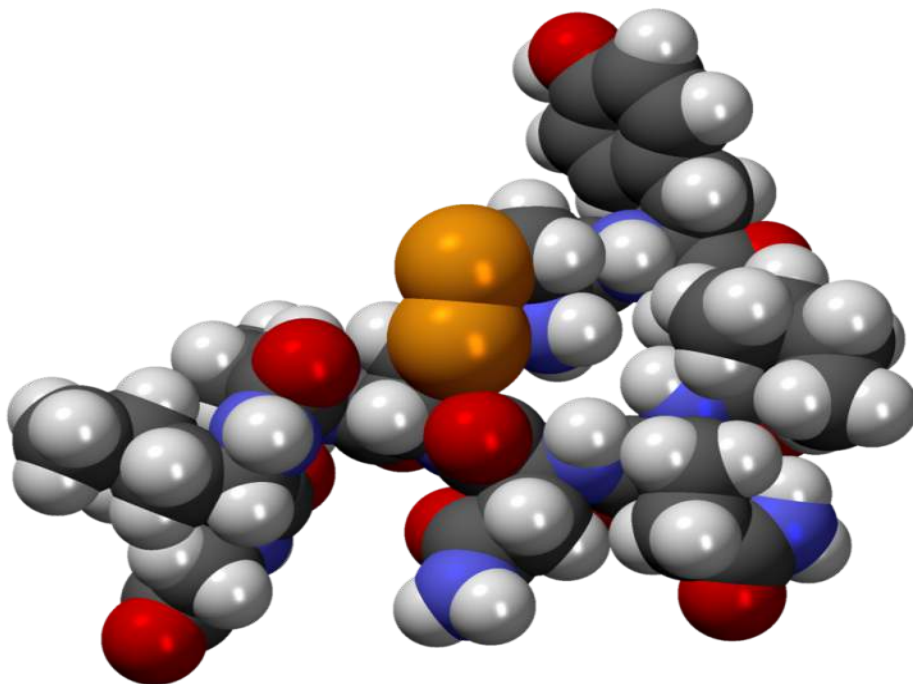
Often, new Mums assume that because nursing a child is a natural process that it's also an easy process. However, this isn't necessarily true. Sure, some women and children take off with breastfeeding and never look back. **There are a number of people, however, who struggle with nursing early on. The problems can come from many different areas including** a lack of support, physical traits like inverted nipples, complicated births and even a simple need for more knowledge. However, most women find that through diligence and hard work, they are able to nurse their babies just as successfully as those who were lucky enough to begin with no problems.

Learning To Nurse – Understanding Milk Production

Most women will notice that their breasts change throughout pregnancy. Actually, one of the most common early symptoms of pregnancy is soreness and tenderness of the breasts. This is because your body is beginning the process which ultimately allows milk production. Alveoli are the specialized cells which actually produce breast milk. **Once a baby suckles, the hormone prolactin increases.** This increase stimulates the alveoli to make milk. The milk is moved through the milk ducts as **oxytocin, another hormone, stimulates the muscles in the breasts.** This movement is generally referred to as the let-down reflex.

Other Roles That Prolactin and Oxytocin Play

Keep in mind that oxytocin doesn't cause only the muscles in the breast to move milk along the ducts. It also helps the uterine muscles to contract. Not only does this help to lessen the bleeding that a woman experiences after birth, but it also helps to contract the uterus. Ultimately, these contractions bring the uterus back to a pre-birth size. Also, oxytocin and prolactin are both strongly believed to be vital links that urge Mums to stay close to their babies.



Learning to Nurse – The Let-Down Reflex Explained

Many women can actually feel the let-down reflex as it begins to happen. Some characterise it as a tingling or an uncomfortable feeling in the breasts. However, some mothers don't feel a thing. Keep in mind, whether there is a strong let-down reflex feeling or not is no indication of whether a woman is producing enough milk. The let-down reflex makes it easier for the baby to get milk while nursing, and usually happens within a few minutes of latching on. However, let-down can occur several times throughout one nursing session, or even when nursing isn't happening at all. Many mothers report that hearing babies crying or even strong reflections on their own baby can induce let-down. Those who have this inclination often wear nursing pads to prevent wet spots on their clothes when out and about.

Prepare Before Birth

While there is really no way to be 100% ready for nursing if one has never actually experienced it, there are many different methods to help a new Mum prepare to breastfeed successfully. The first necessary requirement is for Mum to feel confident that she can breastfeed and to be dedicated to seeing it through. Also, a Mum should consider the following.

- Breastfeeding classes are recommended. These provide opportunities to become informed on the subject and also to ask questions.
- A mother's physician can often make recommendations for Baby-Friendly Hospitals, which are set up especially to help Mums successfully breastfeed their babies. Also, the healthcare provider should be clear early on that Mum wishes to nurse as soon as possible after delivery.
- Investigate local lactation consultants before baby is born.
- Seek support with friends and family who have nursed.

Latching On

There are no hard and fast rules for breastfeeding. As long as baby has a good latch, Mum and baby are on the right track. There are many different holds that can be used during breastfeeding, and initially, the one a Mum chooses typically revolves around whether a vaginal birth or [caesarean section](#) was used. Those who have a vaginal birth often choose the traditional cradle hold. Mums who have had a caesarean may be more comfortable with the football hold, which places baby at Mum's side. Regardless, latching on still works pretty much the same. **Place baby close to the nipple and gently help to guide their mouth to the correct position.**

This generally means that baby's head is tilted back gently, mouth wide open and tongue down. Ideally, baby will take a large mouthful of breast, with his mouth covering more nipple at the bottom than the top. Although it may be scary for baby's nose to be so close to the breast, there is no worry that he can't breathe. Breastfeeding, though natural, is not always easy.