

A close-up photograph of a newborn baby wrapped in a white, fluffy towel. The baby is looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the towel and a hint of a blue surface.

Overcoming Common Breastfeeding Challenges

Merrion Fetal Health

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Breastfeeding is a wonderful experience for mother and child. Both parties in the nursing duo benefit physically, mentally and emotionally from the act of nursing. However, there are sometimes difficulties which must be overcome for the breastfeeding experience to be worry and pain-free. This feature will go through overcoming common breastfeeding challenges.

Overcoming Common Breastfeeding Challenges – Flat and Inverted Nipples

It is highly unlikely that baby will ever nurse from anyone's breasts other than Mum's and will, therefore, never find a more perfect fit regardless of breast size or shape. Still, some women have problems nursing simply because of the way their breasts are made. Fortunately, with patience and dedication, these Mums can enjoy the gift of breastfeeding comfortably.

Breast size doesn't matter at all in terms of breastfeeding. However, flat or inverted nipples may make it difficult for baby to latch on. Those with inverted nipples will notice that the peaks of their breasts do not protrude outward but inward. Those with flat nipples do neither. Since baby must latch on to more than just the nipple, however, it is very common to overcome this obstacle with practice. A Mum could attempt to pull her nipples out manually and should definitely speak with her physician if she's concerned. Also, nipples usually become more prominent over the course of breastfeeding.



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Painful and Cracked Nipples

Initially in breastfeeding, it isn't uncommon for nipples to be quite sore. Once a proper latch is achieved, nursing should be fairly pain-free, but if nipples have already been cracked, the pain may still be there. Also, if baby isn't taking enough of the breast into his mouth but is sucking mainly on the nipple itself, soreness will likely occur.

Don't feel bad. Nursing is a learning process. Mum and baby will learn how to do it in no time! Ask for help from a professional and don't leave sore nipples untreated. The key to pain-free nipples is to get a good latch. Don't allow baby to continue suckling if a good latch isn't achieved.

Break the suction with your pinky finger inside the corner of baby's mouth. It is absolutely excruciating to try to remove a baby from the breast without breaking the suction first. Re-latch and try again.

If pain is so intense that it is tempting to delay feeding, get help from a lactation consultant. Delayed feedings may actually harm milk supply and, ironically, cause more pain. Try different positions with each feeding, as this will give different areas of the breast and nipple a break.

Another old, but greatly effective, rule of thumb is to rub a little breast milk on the nipples after a feeding. Also, give nipples the chance to air-dry after each nursing session. Other tips include:

- Wear well-fitting bras and avoid clothes that are overly constricting on the breast area.
- When washing, use only warm water on the breasts and nipples. Soaps and other ointments can dry out the nipples and are unnecessary.
- Although there are some effective soothing ointments that may be used while breastfeeding, check with a doctor before going this route.
- Regularly change nursing pads.
- Check with a physician for appropriate pain relievers for a nursing Mum.

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Not Enough Milk

Most new mothers worry that they aren't making enough milk, but this usually isn't the case at all. As long as baby is growing and thriving, enough milk is getting to them. Yet, this is one reason that many Mums choose formula; they can actually measure exactly how much nourishment their child is receiving, which is a relief in many ways. However, the breasts adapt to what a child needs, and will make milk accordingly most of the time. In the event that enough milk isn't made, the following can be tried:

- A good latch and a good position is of the utmost importance.
- Regular, baby led nursing combats low milk supply.
- Make sure baby has a turn at both breasts for each feeding. Alternate which breast is suckled first from feeding to feeding. Once baby has either quit suckling or has slowed significantly, offer the second breast until he finishes.
- While trying to increase milk supply, avoid supplementing with formula. Limit pacifier time, as well.

Please note that there will be times when baby wants more or less milk. This is not an indication of low milk supply. If a baby suddenly wants to nurse constantly, this is usually due to a growth spurt. Wanting to nurse less suddenly is often nature's way of getting milk supply and baby's needs in sync.

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Breastfeeding is undoubtedly the best choice for most Mums and children. However, there are concerns and issues that crop up even with this natural act. These issues can be daunting for Mum especially, who may be uncomfortable and worried. However, with practice and patience, nearly all breastfeeding attempts can be successful.

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