

How Do I Hold My Baby While Breastfeeding?

Although breastfeeding is natural, there is a learning process for both you and your baby. Allow yourself several weeks to perfect these techniques. If at any time you feel unsure you are feeding your baby correctly, seek the help of a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider. Correct positioning and latch-on can prevent many of the common problems mothers encounter when starting to breastfeed. You will most likely find that once breastfeeding is fully established, it can be one of the most rewarding experiences of new motherhood.

Get Comfortable

Choose a comfortable chair or sofa with good support for your back. Use a foot stool to bring your knees upward so your lap is slightly inclined and the pressure is off the small of your back. Position pillows to support your arms and relax your shoulders while you hold your baby.

Positioning Your Baby

With any position you choose to hold your baby, turn your baby completely onto his side, “tummy-to-tummy”, so his mouth is directly in front of your breast and he does not need to turn his head to get to your nipple.

- ♥ Use pillows to support your baby horizontally above your waist at breast level. A pillow that makes a flat “shelf” provides better support than a “stuffed” pillow.
- ♥ Position your baby with his nose to your nipple so he has to “reach up” slightly to grasp your nipple.
- ♥ Place your baby’s lower arm around your waist. This will draw him close to you. Look for a straight lineup between your baby’s ears, shoulders and hips. His legs should curl around your waist.

Breastfeeding Positions



Cradle Hold

This is the position you may see most frequently in pictures of breastfeeding mothers. Baby’s head is positioned at your elbow with your forearm supporting the rest of his body. Your other hand is free to support your breast or to stroke your baby’s hand or face.

Side-Lying Hold

Is great for getting a bit of rest while your baby breastfeeds or if you want to avoid sitting because of soreness from delivery. Tuck a pillow under your head, position your baby tummy-to-tummy with his head at your breast.



Football Hold (clutch hold)

This position is good for mothers who have had a Cesarean delivery because the weight of the baby is not pressing against your abdomen. This is also a good position for larger breasted women as it may allow a better view of your baby while breastfeeding. Position your baby’s head in either

one of your hands and the rest of the baby’s body along the same forearm. Your baby’s feet will point towards your back and tuck nicely between your arm and waist.



Cross-Cradle Hold

This is one of the preferred positions when your baby is a newborn as you will have good control of your baby’s head when you place your hand near your baby’s ears. Support your baby’s back with your forearm and bring baby across your tummy and to your breast.

Getting Baby to Latch-On

- ♥ Compress your areola (the dark brown part of your breast) slightly to make a “nipple sandwich” for your baby. This will allow your baby to get a deeper latch-on. Make sure your fingers are well behind the edges of the areola (1” to 1½” from the base of the nipple).

The “U” hold is used to make this “nipple sandwich” when your baby is held across your lap (in the cradle, cross cradle or side lying position) and the “C” hold is used for the football position.

- ♥ Stroke your baby’s lips with your nipple. Pull him quickly on to your breast when he opens his mouth wide. Be sure to wait for his mouth to be open WIDE (like a yawn) and his tongue to come forward. He should get the nipple and a “big mouthful” of your areola in his mouth. Bring the baby to your breast, not your breast to your baby!
- ♥ Listen for swallowing every 3 to 5 sucks. Once your milk has come in and you have a let-down reflex, you will notice swallowing with every suck.

Look for These Positive Signs with Each Feeding

- ♥ The angle of your baby's lips at your breast is greater than 140 degrees.
- ♥ Most of your areola is in your baby's mouth (1" from the base of your nipple, slightly more towards the baby's lower lip than towards the upper lip).
- ♥ Both upper and lower lips are flanged (rolled out).
- ♥ You feel a deep pulling sensation as your baby breastfeeds. It should not be a sharp pain or last more than a moment following the latch-on.
- ♥ Listen for swallowing every 3 - 5 sucks.

Some mothers describe pain as their baby latches-on, but this usually eases as the milk begins to flow. This will subside over time, as your body adjusts to breastfeeding. If it persists, remove your baby from your breast by slipping your finger between his lips and your breast. Allow him to try to latch-on again.

Finally, let your baby nurse for 15-20 minutes from each breast or 20-30 minutes on one breast. Eight to twelve (8-12) feedings each 24 hour period is common for a newborn. For additional details, refer to Ameda Answer Sheet "How Do I Know My Baby Getting Enough Breast Milk?" for details.

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What is a Let-down Reflex?

A few minutes into the feeding, some mothers feel a tingling or "pins-and-needles" sensation as their milk releases. This release is referred to as the "let-down". This means that hormones have stimulated milk to flow easily. You may also notice some after-birth contractions (first 1-2 weeks only) of your uterus, a slowing and deepening of your baby's sucking pattern or milk dripping from your other breast. These are all good signs that the hormones of breastfeeding are working for you and your baby!

Mothers may have 2-5 let-down reflexes during a breastfeeding session. The first is the most noticeable. You may not even feel the others. Some mothers never feel a let-down, but breastfeeding will still be progressing normally.

Tips for Larger Breasted Mothers

- ♥ It may help to use a rolled towel or small blanket under your breast for extra support while breastfeeding.
- ♥ Concentrate on holding the area just beyond the areola and use the "nipple sandwich" techniques described earlier.
- ♥ Some women find that wearing a very supportive bra during breastfeeding is not comfortable. Wear whatever you find most comfortable. A nursing bra is not a requirement for breastfeeding.

If at any time you have pain, you are unsure of how well the baby is latched-on or the baby does not seem satisfied, obtain help from a Board Certified Lactation Consultant or other knowledgeable health care provider.

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References on File.

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