

Information for breastfeeding families

Positioning & Latch-on: Mother-led Latching



The way you hold your baby and how he latches on to the breast are the keys to comfortable feeding for you and full feedings for your baby. Correct positioning and latch-on can prevent many of the common problems mothers encounter when starting to breastfeed.

Mother-led latching is good for any time the baby needs additional assistance, is too sleepy to latch spontaneously, or you have sore nipples.

Getting comfortable

Choose a comfortable chair or sofa with good support for your back. Use a footstool to bring your knees up so your lap is slightly inclined and the pressure is off the small of your back. Position pillows wherever needed to support your arms and relax your shoulders.



Look for a straight line from the baby's ear to the shoulder to the hips. His head should not be tucked into his chest or tipped backwards.

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 the breast and he does not need to turn his head at all to get to the nipple.

Position your baby with his nose to your nipple so he has to "reach up" slightly to grasp the nipple. His chin should touch the breast first, then grasp the nipple.



Place your baby's lower arm around your waist. This will draw him close to you. Look for a straight line from your baby's ears, to shoulders, to hips. His legs should curl around your waist.

Basic positions for breastfeeding

Beginner's Positions
(first few days or weeks)

Cross Cradle Hold
Football Hold

Advanced Positions

(after the latch-on is easy and quick)

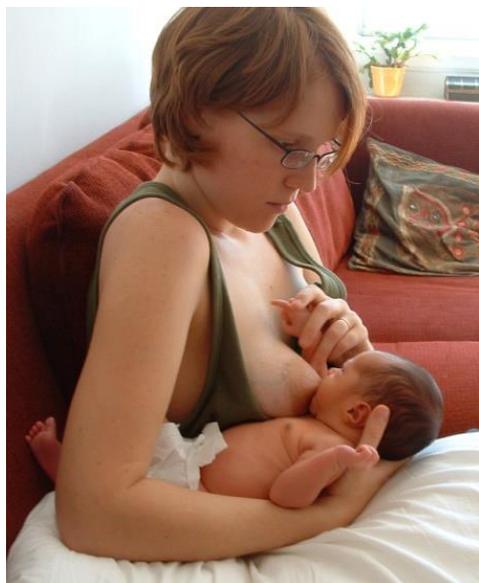
Cradle Hold
Side Lying

The cross-cradle hold is one of the preferred positions for the early days of breastfeeding. You will have good control of the position of your baby's head when you place your hand behind your baby's ears. Roll the baby to face you "belly to belly".



The football hold (clutch hold) is good for mothers who have had a cesarean delivery because the weight of the baby is not on the abdomen. Tuck the baby under your arm with pillow support to place the baby at breast height. Tuck a pillow or rolled receiving blanket under your wrist for support.

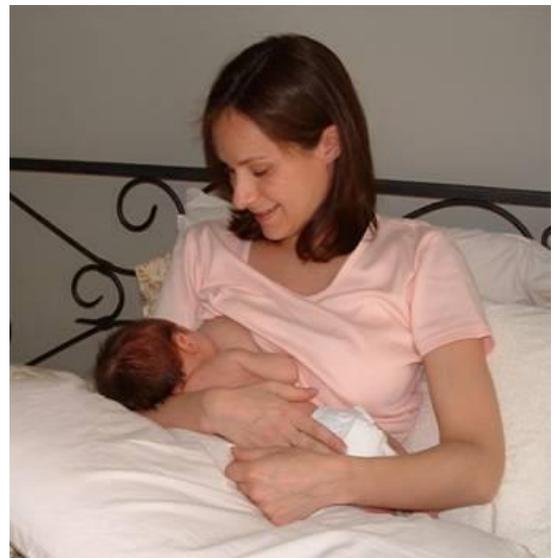
Using a C-hold, place your baby facing you with baby's mouth at nipple height. Baby's hips should be flexed with legs and feet tucked under your arm.



Side lying is great for getting a bit of rest while your baby nurses or if you want to avoid sitting because of soreness. Notice the pillow support and your back and the baby's back, and between your legs. Roll the baby towards you "belly to belly".



The Cradle hold is great for after the baby is nursing easily and the latch-on is easy. It is the most common position and you will often see this in pictures of breastfeeding mothers. Please wait to use this position until your baby latches easily.



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Latch-on

Compress your areola slightly to make a "nipple sandwich" for the baby. This will allow the baby to get a deeper latch-on. Make sure your fingers are well behind the edges of the areola (1 to 1 ½ " from the base of the nipple). Allow your baby's head to lean back slightly so his chin touches the breast first.



An easy way to remember how to hold your hand is to keep your thumb by your baby's nose and your fingers by the baby's chin. That way you will automatically rotate your hand to match the baby's positioning.

Touch your nipple to the philtrum (the skin between his nose and lips). Your baby will open wide and you can bring him on to the breast. If he doesn't, tickle the philtrum and wait until he opens WIDE (like a yawn) and his tongue comes forward. He should get the nipple and a "big mouthful" of the areola (the dark brown part of the breast) in his mouth. Bring the baby to the breast, not the breast to the baby!

Listen for swallowing every 3 to 5 sucks (may not be apparent until your milk volume increases). Once your milk is in you will notice swallowing with every suck.

Typically newborns feed more than 8 times each 24 hours. Let your baby nurse for as long as he wishes on the first side, then offer the second side. Refer to the handout "How do I know my baby is getting enough?" for details.

Check your latch-on

Your baby's *chin* should touch the breast, his nose should be free.

Worried that your baby can't breathe while at the breast? Don't! If the baby truly can't breathe, he will let go. Usually, babies can breathe easily even when pressed close to the breast because they can breathe around the "corners" of their noses. Do not press on the breast to make a breathing passage for the baby to breathe. If necessary, pull the baby's hips in closer to you. This should free up his nose.

Some mothers describe pain as their baby latches-on that eases as the milk begins to flow. This will subside over time, as your body adapts to breastfeeding. If it persists, remove your baby from the breast and re-attach him. The angle of your baby's lips at the breast is 140 degrees or greater.



Most of the areola is in your baby's mouth and both upper and lower lips are flanged (rolled out). You feel deep pulling sensation as the baby nurses. It should not be sharp pain or last more than a moment during the latch-on.

If you feel pain, reattach your baby. But *first* try to tuck him in closely, and slide him down an inch or two to see if that will help.

If you need to remove your baby from the breast, slip your finger between his lips and gums to break the suction. Wait for the suction to release, and remove him.