

# Breastfeeding after a planned c-section



## Breastfeeding works after c-sections too!



**Early contact:** Most hospitals now provide immediate and sustained skin to skin contact for mother and baby after a c-section if there are no health problems. This contact keeps baby warm and helps to steady breathing and blood pressure for you both. Talk to your birth partner about the importance of this early contact so they know to ask if it does not occur as routine.

**First feed:** During this skin to skin contact time in theatre and in the recovery area your baby may show signs of wanting to go to the breast. This early suckling provides colostrum to nourish your baby and develop baby's immune system.

**Pain relief:** Medications are available suitable for breastfeeding. Ask for pain relief as needed so you are comfortable moving about and can relax to feed your baby.

**Position:** Side lying is a useful position after a c-section. Have support behind your back such as the bed rail or pillows. A pillow or a rolled up towel under your tummy and between you knees can reduce strain also. Baby lies facing mother chest to chest, start with nose level with nipple and then chin to breast with a wide open mouth.



**Only mother's milk:** You make colostrum for the first days in small amounts because your baby's tummy is very small. Your baby feeds often to get these small amounts and this helps more milk to come and in larger amounts. Unless your baby has a medical condition, your milk is all that is needed.

**Baby near:** When baby is near you can see the early feeding signs and get ready to feed without the stress of a crying baby. The short frequent feeds of the first few days are also easier when baby is near.

**Ask for help:** You may need help to lift the baby and to get in and out of bed if the bed is high. Ask the midwife or physiotherapist to show you ways to move comfortably. Arrange for some help at home to avoid lifting anything heavy and to get some rest each day. A c-section is surgery and you need time to recover.

**What if?** A long labour and an emergency c-section may leave you or baby not able to have contact immediately. When you and baby are stable you can have skin to skin contact and start breastfeeding. If baby is not able to feed, start hand expressing your milk as soon as possible, ideally within the first 2 - 4 hours.



**Get information before birth:** Mother support counsellors, lactation consultants, midwives, and nurses are all used to assisting mothers with breastfeeding after a c-section. If you are expecting a c-section find your local supports before the birth so you know who they are if you need them after the birth.

This is general information. Discuss your specific needs with your midwife or doctor.