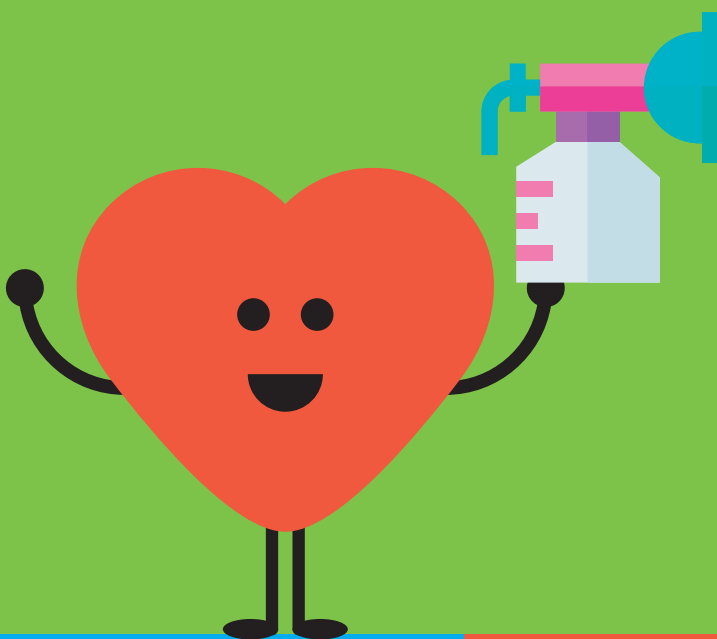


BREASTFEEDING 101



Of all the activities that moms can do to bond with their newborn, breastfeeding is arguably one of the best and most natural things to do. It's a time when mom and baby can share a quiet and cosy moment together while providing the little one with nutrition. Yet breastfeeding can be a cause of stress for many. For first-time mothers, it's natural for them to be anxious when it comes to breastfeeding. Even experienced moms face difficulties too. But on the bright side, it's not without solution. The most important thing is to take it easy, follow some simple steps and do what you can. And guess what? There is no breastfeeding 102. That's because the basics are all you need.



Before you equip yourself with any tools, the first "tool" you should arm yourself with is information and knowledge of breastfeeding. Usually, anything unfamiliar or unknown to you will become easier once there's understanding of the issue at hand. This is particularly useful for new moms. For moms who've been there before and now have to do it again, it does no harm to re-acquaint yourself with the world of breastfeeding. Let's start!

Understanding what milk is, what and when

• After birth

The first milk in your breasts right after delivery is called **colostrum**. It's quite thick and may be yellowish in colour. It's rich in protein and antibodies and easy for baby to digest. Then around the 3rd or 4th day after birth, breasts will begin producing **mature milk** that will gradually replace colostrum.

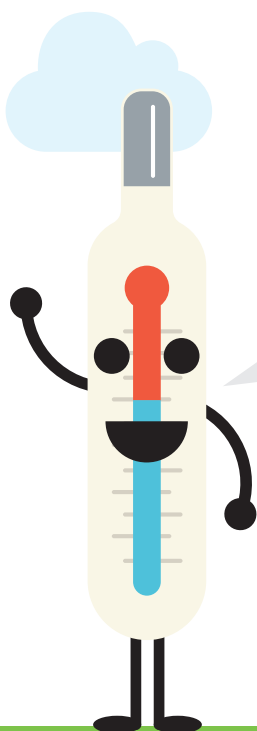
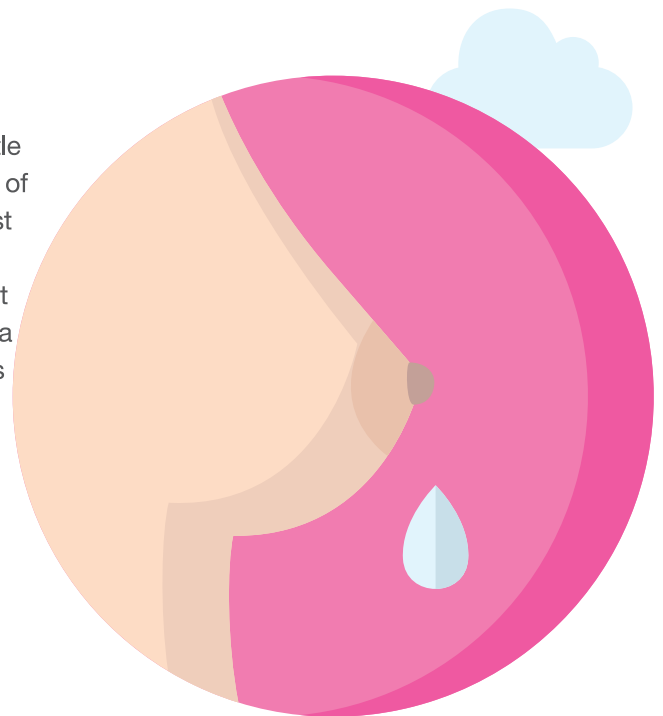
• During nursing

At the start of your breastfeeding session, your breasts will produce what we call **foremilk**. It's thinner and contains many proteins and vitamins. As your baby nurses on, **hindmilk** will be produced. It's creamier in colour and texture because it contains more fat.

Dealing with engorgement

It's normal for your breasts to become larger, heavier and a little sore as they begin producing greater quantities of milk. Some of the fullness is due to extra blood and lymph fluids in the breast tissue. You may become engorged if you're unable to nurse frequently or empty your breasts thoroughly enough in the first few days after birth. Even though you may only be producing a small volume of milk right after delivery, it still helps to clear as much of milk as possible from your breasts by increasing nursing frequency or expressing it out.

Basically, the solution is to feed regularly enough to prevent engorgement. When your baby isn't feeding as much, expressing the milk out at least every 3 hours day and night helps to avoid the possibility of painful engorgement.



Hot tip!

If you feel very engorged and yet have difficulty expressing the milk, apply a hot pack around your breasts. Warmth helps to encourage milk let-down and prevent clogged ducts, while a cold pack can come in handy to relieve swelling and engorgement.



Let's swing into action - how to breastfeed

To ensure a successful breastfeeding session, your baby should be put properly to the breast. Usually, positioning and attaching your baby to the breast comes naturally, but some mothers and babies need time and practice to get it right. The following tips may help.

Positioning

- Hold your baby close, with the baby's body turned towards you, facing you or your breast.
- Make sure your baby's head and body are in a straight line.
- Firmly support the baby's back and buttock.
- You can position your baby in many ways as long as you're comfortable.



Touch your baby's mouth with your nipple. Wait until your baby opens his / her mouth widely.

Bring your baby to the breast (not the breast to the baby). Move your baby's whole body toward the breast, not only the head. Make sure he / she takes as much as possible of brown area (areola) around the nipple.

You can help your baby latch on by holding the breast with your free hand. Keep your thumb well back from the areola and make sure it does not press down on the breast.



The importance of proper attachment

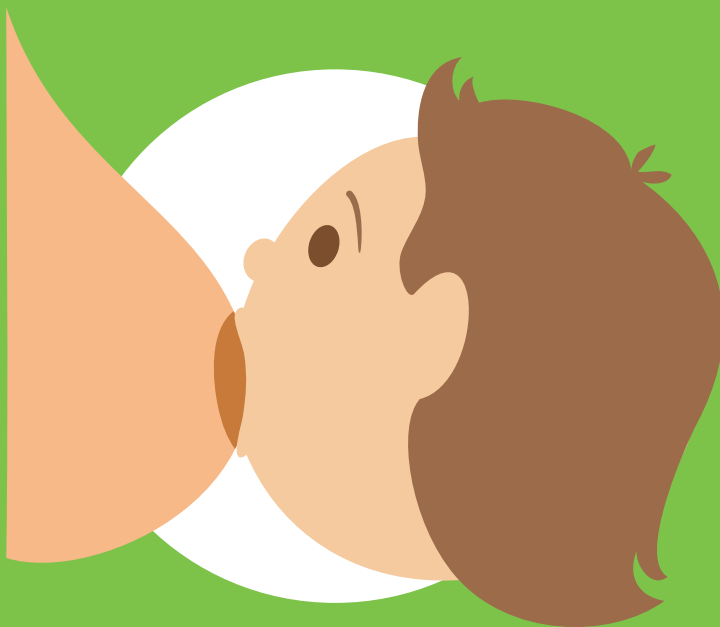
Poor attachment may affect you while you're breastfeeding and lead to inefficient removal of milk and eventually, engorgement. Signs of poor attachment:

- Your nipple looks flattened or striped as it leaves your baby's mouth at the end of the feed
- Pain in the nipples during and after feeds

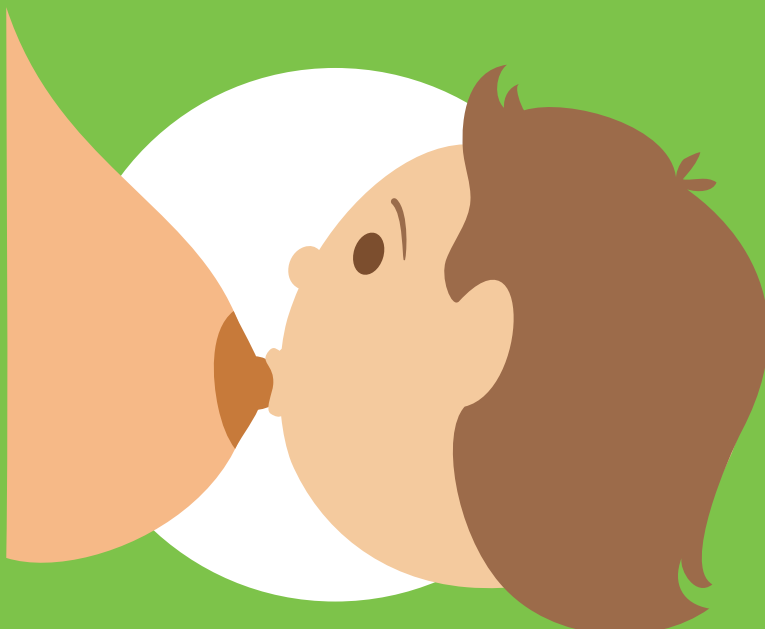
Is your baby feeding well?

What to look out for to assess if your baby is feeding well:

- his mouth is open wide
- his chin is touching the breast
- his lower lip is curled outward
- his nose lies right against your breast, and he is free to breathe
- he suckles, pauses and suckles again in slow, deep sucks
- you may hear your baby swallowing



A baby who is properly attached to the breast.

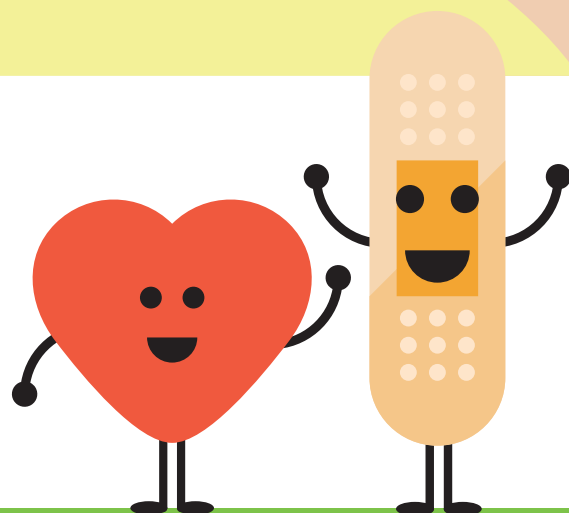
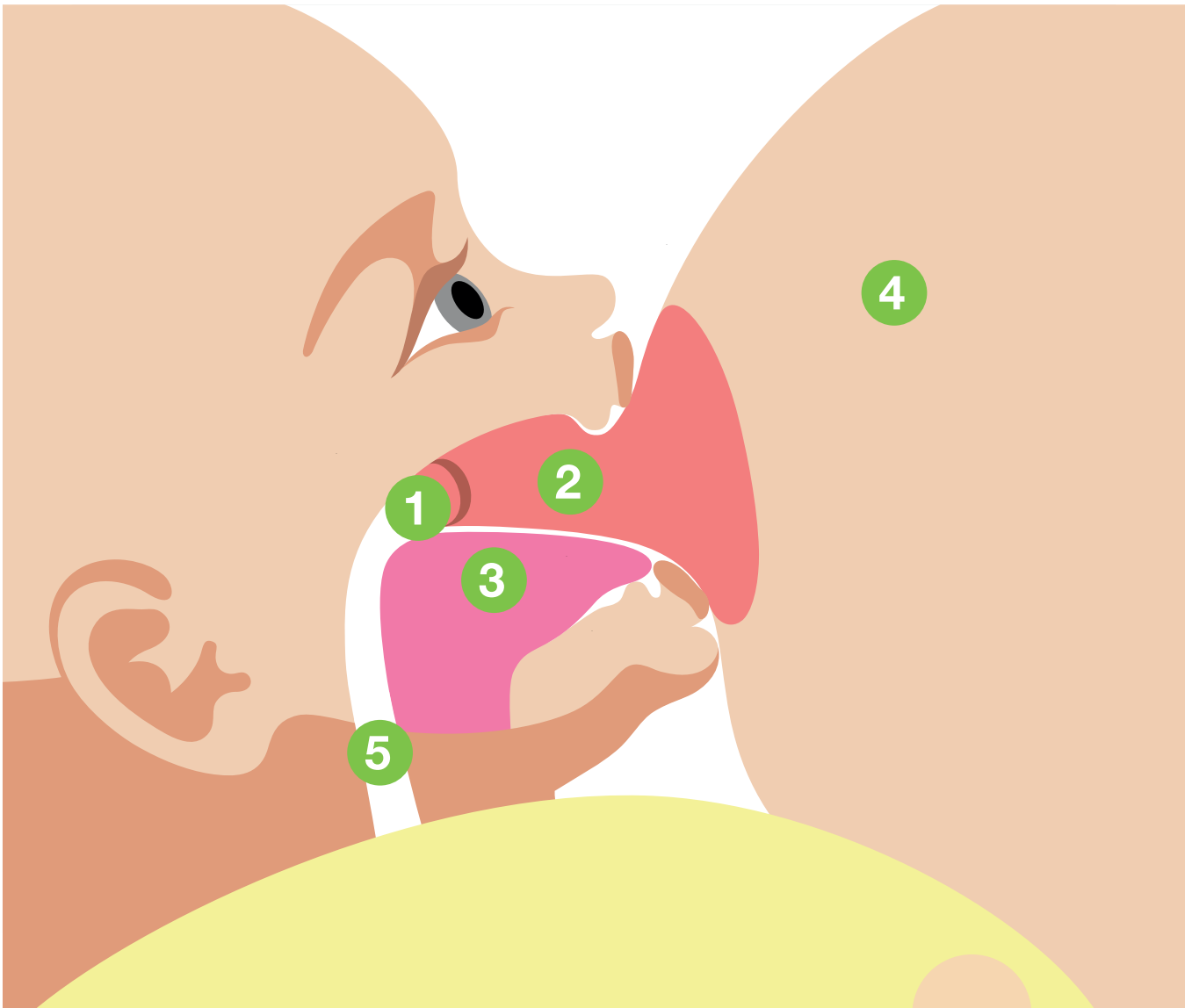


A baby who is not well-attached to the breast.



What goes on inside your baby's mouth when he's feeding properly:

- 1 Nipple
- 2 Areola and breast tissue, with underlying milk ducts
- 3 Baby's tongue
- 4 Breast
- 5 Baby's throat



Breastfeeding basics to live by

The reality is breastfeeding isn't always a bed of roses. You do need to work at it and it may not come easy for some women. In fact, most may struggle a little at the start. But practice makes perfect and the practice will come naturally to you as you do need to feed your newborn anyway. Once you get into a routine, you'll get more accustomed to it. With familiarity, comes confidence. The next thing you know, you'll find yourself actually looking forward to every nursing session.

Things to bear in mind!

- In the beginning, it's normal that you may not have a lot of milk. Don't worry. Just breastfeed and keep going. Breastfeeding works very much on the theory of demand and supply. The more you feed, the more milk your breasts will produce as they're essentially responding to what's required.
- If you're a working mom, have a milk expression schedule and stick to it. Routine helps you plan your work life around your pumping duties while still ensuring your little one at home has his / her supply of mommy's milk. It's also a good way to prevent engorgement while you're away from your baby. However, proper breast milk storing techniques are important.
 - after thawing the milk, it cannot be stored again and used in the future.
 - use containers made of glass or BPA-free plastic (plastic storage bags for breast milk are handy).
 - for short-term storage, fridge is good while the freezer is best for long term.
 - if you're pumping regularly, you can save time by storing the pieces of your pump that have come in contact with your milk in a Ziploc bag in the fridge between every pumping session. Instead of washing the kit every time it's used, you can wash it once a day with hot soapy water. Rinse well, then sterilise it before use.
- Balanced diet is a must. No smoking, no alcohol. A little dietary adjustment can go a long way for the health your little one.
- The DON'Ts.
 - don't stress yourself over it. Just do what you can.
 - don't compare yourself with other moms. Sure, you can be envious of those with an abundance of supply but that's all there is. Every woman is different. Your milk supply isn't indicative of how you are as a mom.
 - don't be too hard on yourself. If you're not getting it right the first time, take a step back before you try again. Patience pays off and a positive mindset soothes the soul.

