

The Hospital Experience

What to expect and how to make it memorable



Contact List

Name:

Address:

Obstetrician:

Pediatrician:

WIC Clinic:

Peer Counselor/Lactation Consultant:

Hospital:

Emergency:

Notes:

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A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, looking down at a newborn baby she is holding. The baby is wrapped in a white cloth with blue floral patterns. The woman's face is in profile, and she has a gentle expression. The background is softly blurred.

Make Beautiful Memories Your Way.

Having a baby is a beautiful time, but for some women the birthing experience does not turn out like expected. This book provides tips to help you gain more control over what happens to you and your baby in the hospital. Use it to ensure that you and your newborn have a wonderful experience.

Your Pregnancy

Learn as much as you can about breastfeeding.

Read pamphlets and watch any DVDs that you get from the WIC Program. Take prenatal and breastfeeding classes at your local hospital or WIC clinic. The more you know about breastfeeding the easier it will be because you'll have a better idea of what to expect.



Create a support system.

Family

Share the information you get from WIC with the people who will be helping you when your baby gets here — especially your partner and your mother. As your partner and mother learn more about breastfeeding, they will be more supportive and more prepared to help you.

Hospital

Try to find a Baby-Friendly Hospital or Birth Center. Baby-Friendly Hospitals and Birth Centers require breastfeeding training for all their staff and encourage policies that ensure breastfeeding support. To locate a Baby-Friendly Hospital or Birth Center in your area visit www.babyfriendlyusa.org.

Your health-care provider is your choice.

Find a health-care provider who is supportive of breastfeeding. Let your doctor know that you plan to breastfeed.

Ask about WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors.

If available, meet with a Peer Counselor during your pregnancy and request her contact information. Peer Counselors are WIC moms who breastfed their babies and who have been trained to help moms breastfeed. If you have a Peer Counselor, call her soon after having your baby so she can support you.



Plan to exclusively breastfeed.

Exclusive breastfeeding means your baby is receiving your breastmilk and nothing else. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 4-6 weeks is extremely important for establishing a good milk supply. The first several weeks of breastfeeding “sets” your milk supply. It’s as if your baby is calling in his order for just the right amount of milk he needs to grow. Using formula in the early weeks may set your milk supply at a lower volume than your baby needs. If you set your milk supply at a higher volume it will be easier to maintain your supply for as long as you want to breastfeed.



At the Hospital

Plan to limit your visitors.

You will need to breastfeed your baby about 10-12 times every 24 hours. Too many visitors may be overwhelming.

Remember, there will be plenty of hospital staff coming in and out of your room – your nurse, your doctor, your baby's doctor, the

audiologist, the birth certificate authority, the photographer, food service workers, housekeeping, and others. Limit your visitors so you have plenty of time for breastfeeding and for important skin-to-skin contact.

To avoid uncomfortable moments with visitors:

- Ask them to knock and wait for a reply before entering your room.
- Ask some of them to call instead of visiting you at the hospital or wait to visit you and the baby at home.
- Tell them you will be breastfeeding often and in skin-to-skin contact with your baby between feedings.
- Tell them they may not be able to stay long if you need to feed the baby soon after they arrive.





Skin-to-skin contact.

You should have skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth for at least 60 minutes and then as often as possible afterwards. Skin-to-skin contact is when you keep your baby dressed only in a diaper and cap against your bare skin, with a blanket covering your baby's back. Ask hospital staff if they can do routine newborn procedures with your baby on your chest rather than taking your baby away. Babies kept skin-to-skin are more likely to breastfeed well and breastfeed often which is important for establishing your milk supply. Holding your baby skin-to-skin is the best thing you can do for breastfeeding success.





Ask to keep your baby in the same room with you at all times.

Rooming in helps you learn your baby's early hunger cues so that you can feed him at his first signs of hunger. Early hunger cues include lip movements, rooting, sucking on fingers or on hands. Fussing and crying are later hunger cues.

Avoid giving your baby bottles or pacifiers.

Early introduction of bottles and pacifiers should be avoided because it can keep you from establishing a good milk supply. All of your baby's suckling in the first few weeks should be at your breast.

Feed your baby as soon as possible after delivery.

Your baby will be alert and interested in breastfeeding for the first hour or two after delivery. Ask to breastfeed your baby within the first 30-minutes-to-an-hour, if possible.

If you have a cesarean delivery and are unable to nurse your baby right after birth, ask to begin breastfeeding as soon as possible.

While skin-to-skin with your baby, lean back and relax. Babies often will slowly make their way to the breast and start breastfeeding on their own.

If your baby has to be taken away for a procedure, send your birthing partner with your baby to calm him. A pacifier may be recommended as a comfort measure during procedures such as lab draws, check-ups, and baths. Take the pacifier from your baby as soon as he is returned and breastfeed to calm him instead.





Your colostrum is extremely important for your baby.

Colostrum is the milk you will make in the first few days after your baby is born. It is often thick and can be clear to yellowish. Colostrum coats your baby's insides and helps prevent allergies, viruses, and infections. Your colostrum is so protective – it's similar to giving your baby his first immunization.

You will produce very small amounts of colostrum in the first day. As your baby's stomach size increases, so does your milk supply.

Most babies go into a very deep sleep about two hours after delivery and may be hard to wake for the first 24 hours. It is important that you wake your baby to feed often – about every two to three hours.

If you are having difficulty waking your baby, try skin-to-skin contact, which will often wake a baby.





Uterine cramping is normal.

After having your baby you may experience cramping during breastfeeding. It may feel like menstrual cramps or a milder version of the uterine cramping you experienced during labor. This is your uterus returning to its pre-pregnancy size. Cramping during breastfeeding will lessen as your body recovers.



Ask to see a Lactation Consultant.

Even if you think breastfeeding is going well, it's a good idea to ask someone to look at how the baby is positioned and latched. This will give them a chance to give you tips to avoid soreness and how to recognize when your baby is hungry or full.

If your baby is having difficulty latching, ask for assistance in hand expressing your colostrum into a container and using an alternate feeding method (other than a bottle) to feed your baby.



If your baby can't breastfeed, ask for a breast pump.

If your baby is unable to breastfeed for any reason, it is important to begin pumping within 6 hours of delivery with an electric pump. If you think you will need a pump longer than your hospital stay, call your WIC office immediately (from the hospital) to make an appointment. Tell the person at WIC that you need to come to the clinic right away to get a breast pump and not a certification appointment.



Depo-Provera may decrease your milk supply if given early.

Health-care professionals commonly give Depo-Provera shots, which is a type of birth control, before you are discharged from the hospital. The Depo-Provera shot may delay or prevent milk production if given before milk supply is well established. If you would like to use Depo-Provera for birth control, wait until about six weeks postpartum when your milk supply is established.



Be aware of formula advertising.

You will probably be offered a free diaper bag containing formula from the hospital. Formula manufacturers distribute free formula samples and discount coupons to doctors and hospitals for the following reasons:

- Research indicates that mothers who take a formula gift bag are more likely to stop exclusively breastfeeding their babies by 10 weeks of age. Families are then forced to purchase their own formula for the rest of their baby's first year.
- Often these bags are called breastfeeding promotion bags but they still contain formula samples and coupons. Some baby magazines even have tear out coupons reminding you to ask for your free bag at the hospital. Do not feel obligated to take the bag containing free formula. You can refuse it.
- Remember, any amount of formula in the first month can decrease your milk supply. It is extremely important to exclusively breastfeed for at least the first month to protect your milk supply.



Ask the hospital what kind of breastfeeding support they offer after discharge.

Many hospitals offer at least one free breastfeeding assistance visit after discharge. You can also call your local WIC office and ask to speak with a breastfeeding counselor. Breastfeeding may take some practice for you and your infant. Do not be afraid to ask for help as soon as you think you may need it.



Once you are home, continue to avoid formula.

Just one bottle of formula:

- can reduce your breastmilk supply.
- can increase your baby's risk of developing allergies and diabetes as well as intestinal and bacterial disease.
- lessens the protective effect of your breastmilk on your baby.
- can result in weaning from the breast.



Packing List for the Hospital

For Mom, During Labor:

- ☐ Books, breastfeeding tips, labor hints and childbirth notes or guidelines
- ☐ Eye glasses as well as contact case and solution
- ☐ Massage aids: tennis balls or wooden massagers
- ☐ Comfort aids: lotion and socks (for cold feet)
- ☐ Music to help with relaxation
- ☐ Something to use as a fan (paper fan or small hand-held individual plastic fan)
- ☐ Dental care items: toothpaste, toothbrush
- ☐ Two regular-sized bed pillows (in bright, distinctive, hard-to-lose pillowcases)
- ☐ Camera/video camera, digital card, and extra batteries or battery charger
- ☐ List of names and phone numbers of people to notify
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ Snacks and drinks

For Mom, After Birth:

- ☐ Loose comfortable clothes for lounging and breastfeeding
- ☐ Slippers, extra socks and underwear
- ☐ Nursing bras or firm-fitting sports bra
- ☐ Shampoo, conditioner, comb/brush, other hair care items such as clips and rubber bands
- ☐ Make-up, deodorant, lip balm or moisturizer
- ☐ Baby's "memory" book – for footprints or staff names and guest signatures
- ☐ Entertainment items (books, crayons, games) especially if children are to visit in the hospital
- ☐ Clothes and shoes to wear home (a loose outfit; something you could wear at five months pregnant)

For Baby:

- ☐ Clothes for hospital baby photo
- ☐ Clothes for baby to wear home
- ☐ Blanket(s) and outer wear for going home (as much as the season dictates)
- ☐ Rear-facing car seat



Before you reach for formula, reach for the phone and call **WIC** for help. Your breastmilk is a gift of health to your baby that lasts a lifetime. You only have one opportunity to give this gift to your baby.

Breastfeeding is the best gift for your baby!

Breastfeeding questions?

Call

Your Local WIC Agency:



California Department of Public Health, California WIC Program
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

1-800-852-5770  #900028 Rev 1/15

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