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## Breastfeeding: Caring for Yourself

When you have a new little person in your life, it's easy to forget about yourself. There are new demands on your time. There are also new responsibilities. But it's important to take care of yourself as well as your baby. That way you both feel your best.

### Healthy Habits

- Get exercise when you can. To reduce milk leakage, nurse right before activity.
- Avoid smoking. Smoking is unhealthy for you and may cause you to make less milk. Secondhand smoke is also harmful to your baby.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about alcohol, if you choose to drink.
- When you're sick, tell your healthcare provider that you are breastfeeding. In most cases, you can still continue to breastfeed.
- Ask your healthcare provider before taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications, herbs, or supplements.



### Comfy Clothes

- Get fitted for a nursing bra. Avoid underwires. Many stores have on-site fitting. Or ask your doctor or nurse for a referral.
- Place breast pads inside your bra. They can absorb leaking milk.
- Choose an extra-supportive bra for exercise. Or you can wear two bras at the same time for more support.
- Wear loose tops that can be lifted for breastfeeding. You can also buy clothes specially made for breastfeeding moms.

### A Note About Sex

After delivery, it may take a while before your interest in lovemaking returns. Share your feelings with your partner. When you're ready, know that:

- Breastfeeding doesn't keep you from getting pregnant. Talk to your doctor about birth control.
- Breastfeeding hormones can cause vaginal dryness. If so, try using a water-based lubricant.
- Milk may let down when you are aroused. Keeping a towel by the bed can be helpful.

### When to Call Your Doctor

- The baby has white patches on the lips, mouth, tongue, or throat (thrush).
- The baby is listless, refuses to nurse, or is sleeping too much.
- The baby is losing weight after the first week.
- The baby's temperature, taken under the arm, is over 99°F.
- You have a red spot or streaks on your breast, flu-like symptoms, or fever (**mastitis**).
- You have a rash or cracks on your nipples, or if they burn or itch.
- You have a hard lump in your breast.
- You feel very sad or don't want to be with your baby.