

# Breastfeeding your multiples:

## Getting off to a good start

Nursing your babies or expressing your milk early and often can help breastfeeding get off to a good start. Human milk is important for multiples as they are often smaller at birth and need all the advantages that mother's milk gives. Babies who get their mother's milk are less likely to get sick.

### Still pregnant?

Register for the Multiples Breastfeeding Class at 604-875-2282.

### How do I get started?

As a mother of multiples you may be wondering how you will make milk for more than one baby. Here are some key points:

- 1. Start skin-to-skin contact:** as soon as you can after birth and continue whenever possible. Hold your babies against your bare chest or your partner's bare chest with your babies wearing just diapers.
  - Your babies' heart rates, breathing rates, temperatures and blood sugars will become more stable
  - Your babies will cry less
  - You will make more milk because skin contact increases hormones that help make milk
- 2. The more you feed or express milk, the more milk you will make.** When your babies breastfeed or you hand express or pump you milk, your body responds to the demand for milk by making more milk.
  - In the first few days, hand express for a few minutes after each feeding to increase your milk supply.
  - Feed your babies and hand express 8 or more times in 24 hours.
  - If your babies are not breastfeeding or not breastfeeding effectively, express or pump at least 8 times in 24 hours.



Watch a video on hand expression at: [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-hand-expressing-breastmilk](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-hand-expressing-breastmilk)

- 3. Feed one or two?** When babies are ready to feed directly at the breast most mothers start by feeding one baby at a time. Soon you may want to feed both babies at the same time or "tandem feed." To tandem feed, tuck one baby under each arm using the "football" or "underarm" position.



Watch a video on breastfeeding positions at: [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-breastfeeding-positions](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-breastfeeding-positions)

- 4. Have help.** It is important to have someone help you with each feeding. This person can help position the babies, change diapers and settle the babies after feedings.
- 5. What do I need to buy?** In most cases, you do not need to buy any equipment to breastfeed multiples. It is your choice whether to buy:
  - Comfortable breastfeeding bras
  - Pillows to support your babies while they breastfeed early on. Regular pillows work well. Some mothers find that firm 'twin pillows' may help position babies for tandem feeding.
  - An effective electric pump that enables you to pump both breasts at the same time. The BC Women's Gift Shop sells pumps. These pumps cost about \$250-500. Ask a social worker or nurse if you need help getting an

electric pump. If your babies are premature and are not breastfeeding or not breastfeeding well you may need to rent or buy a pump.

- Containers to store the milk you hand express or pump. The hospital supplies containers for milk storage during your babies' time in the hospital. For use at home some of the best prices for milk storage bags are found on the internet - compare prices!

## Babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

Sometimes babies are born early or have health problems at birth. These babies need special help and are cared for in the NICU. You and your partner are the most important members of your babies' health care team. By spending time with your babies, you will learn their unique needs and the best times to try breastfeeding when they are ready to do so.



Watch "A Premie Needs his Mother" on Channel 68 in your hospital room or on the computer in the NICU family lounge.

Here is some additional guidance if your babies are in the NICU:

### 1. Start hand expressing your milk right after birth:

If your babies could be with you, they would start breastfeeding within the first hour of birth. When your babies cannot be with you, establish your milk supply. Ask your nurse to teach you how.

- Start hand expressing your milk within 1 hour or at least by 6 hours after you give birth.
- Continue hand expressing your milk every 2 to 3 hours.
- By 24 hours after birth, start using a pump as well as hand expressing your milk. We provide a sterile pump kit once a day for use in the hospital. Pumping at your babies' bedside and after holding your babies' skin-to-skin can help you make more milk.



Clean hands and clean equipment are important. Find out more by reading the pamphlet "*Breast Massage, Expression and Hands on Pumping of Mother's Milk*".

- Continue hand expressing and pumping 8 times or more a day.
- Express or pump before bed, at least once in the middle of the night and first thing in the morning. Regularly sleeping through the night means you make less milk.

2. **Store every precious drop in a capped syringe or bottle.** Label and store the milk in the fridge until it can be taken to the NICU.

3. **Find out more** by reading the pamphlet "*Mother's Milk in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit*" given to you by your bedside nurse.



4. **Begin skin-to-skin contact:** Talk to your nurse about how to start skin-to-skin care. Moving from the incubator to your chest may be stressful but babies quickly settle during skin-to-skin care. Prepare yourself so you can hold your babies for as long as possible - at least through one sleep cycle - which takes about an hour. To help you relax and enjoy cuddling with your babies:

- use the bathroom before you start
- have a drink and something to eat
- remove your bra and wear a hospital gown or a shirt that stretches or opens in the front

## Seek Help

If you have questions, need help with expressing your milk, or are expressing milk at least 8 times per day and notice that your milk supply is decreasing over one or two days:



Please talk to your bedside nurse or contact the Lactation Service at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre.

**In-patient:** Phone 604-875-4200 pager 01767

**Out-patient Breastfeeding Clinic Appointments:** 604-875-3135

## Before going home:

Your nurses will help you create a feeding plan depending on how well your babies are feeding. The feeding plan for some babies is to breastfeed at least 8 times in 24 hours. Some babies need time to learn how to feed well. Their feeding plan may be:

1. Breastfeed one or both babies
2. Give additional milk (your expressed milk, donor milk or formula)
3. Express or pump milk for the next feeding

### **Need extra mother's milk?**

If your babies need it, you may get pasteurized mother's milk from the BC Women's Provincial Milk Bank. This milk is treated with heat and tested so it is safe for your babies. Talk to your nurse to learn more.

### **Got extra mother's milk?**

Donate your milk: some mothers make more milk than their babies need. If you have 150 ounces or more extra and would like information on donating milk to the BC Women's Provincial Milk Bank, please call 604-875-2282.

### **Check websites for resources:**

***La Leche League*** [www.LLCC.ca](http://www.LLCC.ca)

***Multiple Births Canada*** [www.multiplebirthscanada.org](http://www.multiplebirthscanada.org)

***Twins, Triplets or More***

[www.nursing.ubc.ca/PDFs/TwinsTripletsAndMore.pdf](http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/PDFs/TwinsTripletsAndMore.pdf)