



# Breastfeeding your multiples: Getting off to a good start

[www.bcwomens.ca](http://www.bcwomens.ca)

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. They are often smaller at birth and need all the advantages that human milk gives. Babies who get their mother's milk are less likely to get sick.

## Still pregnant?

Register for the *Multiples Breastfeeding Class*  
[www.bcwomens.ca](http://www.bcwomens.ca)

Check websites for resources:

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

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

*Multiple Births Prenatal Education*

[http://www.multiplebirthsfamilies.com/articles/post\\_q8.html](http://www.multiplebirthsfamilies.com/articles/post_q8.html)

## How do I get started?

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

- 1. Skin-to-skin contact:** whenever possible, hold your babies against your or your partner's bare chest with your babies wearing just a diaper. Start as soon as you can after birth. This contact can help to stabilize your babies' heart rates, breathing rates, temperatures, and blood sugars. **Babies cry less skin to skin.** You benefit from having higher levels of a hormone that helps you make more milk for your babies. This hormone is called prolactin.
- 2. Milk supply:** is controlled by the amount of suckling or hand expressing/pumping at the breasts. The system works on demand and supply. Milk needs to be removed in order for your body to know to make more milk! Women with multiples are encouraged to feed their babies or express 8 or more times in each 24 hours.
- 3. Breastfeeding:** When your multiples are ready to feed directly at the breast you may choose to feed them one at a time or both together called tandem feeding. It is usually easier to start by feeding one baby at a time. When you try feeding both babies at one time most mothers find tucking each baby under one arm this is called the "football position" the

easiest to use with young babies. To learn how to get comfortable and help your babies feed well please read *Breastfeeding Your Baby*.

- 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 a feed.
- 5. Store your milk:** To learn more about storing your breast milk please read the leaflet *Cleaning Equipment and the Storage and Transportation of Mother's Milk*.
- 6. Get more human milk if your babies need it:** You can get your babies human milk from the milk bank. This milk is treated with heat and tested so it is safe for your babies. To learn more about this option talk to your nurse.
- 7. Donate your milk:** Some women make more milk than their babies need. This extra milk can be donated to the BC Women's Milk Bank. If you have 100 ounces or more extra, call 604-875-2282 for more information about donating.

## If your babies are in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or Intermediate Nursery (IN)

Sometimes babies are born early or have health problems at birth. These babies need special help and so are cared for in the NICU or IN. Here are some important tips if your babies are in either of these areas.

- 1. Hand express your milk right after birth:** When your babies cannot be with you it is important that you start expressing your milk by six hours after you give birth. If your babies were with you,

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breastfeeding would start within an hour of birth. With expressing or pumping, you are trying to copy your babies' feeding patterns. Start with hand expression about every two or three hours. Start using a pump as well as doing hand expression by 24 hours after giving birth. Every precious drop needs to be stored in a capped syringe or bottle, labeled and stored in the fridge until it can be taken to the NICU or IN. Information on milk storage in the NICU is in your *Mother's Milk Diary* given to you by your bedside nurse.

A DVD called, "A Premie Needs his Mother" is available on Channel 68 - the Family Education Channel in BC Women's and on the computer in the NICU family lounge. This DVD includes information on hand expression and pumping.

**2. Have contact with your babies:** If your babies are not feeding directly at the breast, spending time with them and pumping at the bedside will help to make more milk.

**3. Do skin-to-skin care:** Ask your nurse if your baby is well enough to cuddle. Then talk to your nurse about how to start skin-to-skin care. Your baby benefits from being held skin-to-skin. The move from incubator to your chest may be stressful but the baby quickly settles and gets the benefits of skin-to-skin care. It is important to prepare yourself so you can hold your babies through at least one sleep cycle. Which is about 60 minutes. To help you relax and enjoy cuddling with your babies:

- ▶ use the bathroom before you start
- ▶ have a drink and some food
- ▶ remove your bra and wear a hospital gown or a shirt that buttons up in the front

Check out Nils Bergman's website at:  
<http://www.kangaroomothercare.com/research.htm>

**4. Express your milk often:** To establish a milk supply hand express or pump 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 and lower your milk supply. Your nurse will teach you how to hand express and use the hospital pump. There is also the pamphlet *Breast Massage, Expression and Hands On Pumping of Mother's Milk* that you can read.

You will be given a sterile pump kit once a day for use in the hospital. The kit needs to be washed well

after each use with dish soap, cold water then hot water and dried with paper towels. Store it at your baby's bedside table. If you have your own pump make sure it does a good job in getting milk out of your breast. Clean equipment and clean hands are important when pumping and storing milk. Try not to touch the inside of the bottle, cap and pump flange when expressing.

Before you begin to hand express or pump it is helpful to sit down and get as comfortable as possible. Breast massage before and during pumping is helpful in getting more milk out of your breasts. If you notice your milk supply decreasing over a few days, make sure you are expressing at least 8 times a day (including at night) and ask for help.

**5. Get your babies human milk from the milk bank:** if your babies need more milk than you have. This milk is treated with heat and tested so it is safe for your babies. To learn more about this option talk to your nurse or drop in to the NICU lactation consultant session in the family room (ask your nurse for details).

If you have questions, need help with expressing your milk or notice that your milk supply is decreasing over a day or two, please talk to your nurse, read our breastfeeding pamphlets or drop in for the lactation consultant visit in the NICU interview room. Ask your bedside nurse for details.

## What do I need to buy?

In most cases, you do not need to buy any equipment to breastfeed multiples. Comfortable breastfeeding bras and something to store milk in will be useful over time. The hospital supplies containers for storing milk if needed during your time in the hospital. If your babies are premature, ill or just not feeding well you may need an electric pump. An electric pump is best for supporting milk supply while babies are in the NICU. Some families choose to buy a pump rather than rent one. If you buy a pump it needs to be a good effective pump: usually an electric midsize pump. The Special Products Centre 604-875-3020 or toll free 1-866-727-7759 rents and sells pumps. The BC Women's Hospital gift shop also sells pumps. These pumps cost about \$200. Ask a social worker or nurse if you need help getting an electric pump. Buying special chairs, pillows and other equipment is your choice.

Please ask your nurse or the lactation consultants (604-875-2424 local 2282) for any help so you can get off to a good start breastfeeding for your multiples.