Although breastfeeding is instinctive and natural, it is *a skill that both mother and baby have to learn and master.*

Speak up and ask questions about breastfeeding *before your baby is born* and while you are *in the hospital.*

This will help you continue to successfully breastfeed after you go home.

Remember, you should always *talk to your doctor or nurse* about any tips or advice given to you about your health.

Visit us on the web:
www.ndhealth.gov/breastfeeding

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North Dakota
Breastfeeding-Friendly

NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

Breastfeeding: Getting Started

As a mother, one of the most important things you will decide is how to feed your baby

Before you go to the hospital

- Learn about breastfeeding. Go online, read books, take a class and talk with other moms who have reached their breastfeeding goals.
- Get the support of your partner. Go to breastfeeding classes and read the materials together.
- Gather a support team. Ask friends or relatives who have breastfed if you can call them whenever you need help or support.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about breastfeeding. Ask what happens at the hospital after the baby is born. Tell your doctor or nurse you want to breastfeed within the first hour, unless that is not medically possible.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about birthing choices and how they affect breastfeeding.
- If you have a written birth plan, include that you want to breastfeed.
- Ask about breastfeeding support at the hospital where you will have your baby. Find out if it follows the 10 steps of the Baby-Friendly Hospital program.
- Ask if the hospital has a lactation consultant. They are trained to provide additional help if you have problems breastfeeding. Ask how you can contact the lactation consultant.
- You may want to ask supportive friends and family to visit after you go home. This may help you feel more comfortable as you and your baby learn to breastfeed.
- Visit your new baby's doctor or nurse. Ask how they can help you and your baby get started breastfeeding. Ask if they work with a lactation consultant.

At the hospital

It is important to speak up about your desire to breastfeed. When you go to the hospital, tell your nurses and doctors that you want to breastfeed as soon as possible after your baby is born. The following steps can promote bonding with your baby and lay a good foundation for breastfeeding.

- Ask that your baby be placed skin-to-skin on you as soon after birth as possible. Stay skin-to-skin until after the first breastfeeding. Skin-to-skin contact can help keep your baby's temperature and breathing normal. It can also increase your milk supply.
- If you are cold, ask for a blanket to cover you and your baby. Your body heat will keep your baby warm as long as your baby's back is covered. Your baby does not need to be tightly wrapped.
- Tell caregivers you want to breastfeed before your baby's tests are done. Many tests can be done while your baby is skin-to-skin on you. Ask to go along if your baby is taken away for a test.
- If you have a Cesarean birth, you can still have skin-to-skin contact and breastfeed. You should be able to do this within the first two hours unless there is a medical reason not to.
- You can usually breastfeed if you have more than one baby. Your body will make enough milk to feed all your babies.
- Have your baby stay in your room. "Rooming in" encourages skin-to-skin contact and helps you recognize early feeding cues such as when your baby starts sucking his or her fist.
- Speak up and tell staff that you do not want your baby given formula or water, unless there is a medical reason for it.
- Ask staff not to give your baby a pacifier or bottle. These should not be given until your baby is about four weeks old, after breastfeeding is well established.