

Learning to Latch

Newborns and babies of all ages have the ability to find the breast all by themselves, and to latch on by themselves, just as puppies and kittens do.

We don't *make* our babies learn to latch, we *allow* them to learn.

First step: Start with a calm baby

A mother can help her baby learn by keeping her baby *calm and focused*. Babies have more control over their movements when they are calm.

- Position the baby skin on skin, baby's chest on your upper chest.
- Hold your baby in a vertical position, between your breasts.

- Start with the baby asleep, or in very mild hunger. Let the baby wake up on you.
- We have to be on baby time. If the baby wants to sleep, fine.
- When your baby begins to stir:
 - Make eye contact if he opens his eyes.
 - Talk to him. Get his attention.
 - Stroke him. Keep him calm and relaxed.

Next: Follow your baby's lead

- As he gets hungry, he will start twisting his body toward one breast or the other, and may begin bobbing his head up and down, looking for the breast.
- As he moves his head down toward one breast, you can help by moving his rear up towards the other.
- Support neck and shoulders, while allowing his head freedom to move.
- Keep talking to him. Help him stay focused.
- Help him feel snug and supported (no flailing legs!).
- Keep face and cheek touching breast. He knows it by feel, not by sight.
- Line up nose to nipple, chin and lower lip touching the breast.
- Baby can then reach with his upper lip up and over nipple to an "off-center" latch.
- A comfortable latch allows him to get milk, and swallowing milk is what teaches him that he is holding his mouth correctly.
- Once he's had a little practice, he'll "get it" and you won't have to do all of this.

If the baby is too tight or agitated, calm the baby by:

Moving him up away from the nipple. (Keep the breast a happy place to be!)

1. Moving him back upright between your breasts. Stroke him.
2. Eye contact, talking to him; "shhhhhhhh ..."
3. Letting him suck on your finger, soft side up at the palate.
4. Handing baby to daddy or grandparent.
5. (Feeding a little breastmilk or formula – ½ to 1 ounce or so.)

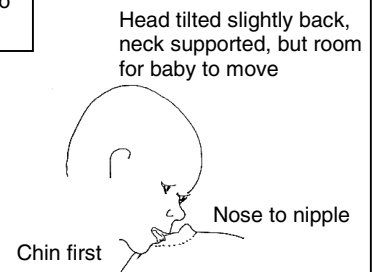
As soon as the baby has calmed down, put baby back to your chest, and let baby look for breast again.

No shoving!

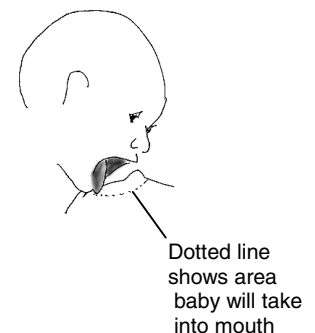
- No "Rapid Arm Movement."
- We don't *make* baby latch.
- We *allow* baby to latch.
- We watch baby learn.
- It's okay to help, but don't do it for baby.

1. After your baby has moved down toward one breast:

- Follow baby's lead
- Enjoy!
- Mother and baby calm



2. Baby opens wide. When your baby feels chin, tongue, lips on breast, he'll open mouth wide and reach up and over nipple.



3. Off-center latch. More areola will be visible at upper lip, less at lower lip. (Areola size varies a lot. You may draw yours in.)

