



Lactation University Volunteer Support Program

Track 1: Prenatal Meetings

**Theme: Breastfeeding Myths**

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Attendees will be able to explain why breastfeeding moms get more sleep
2. Attendees will be able to explain why they can still exercise while breastfeeding
3. Attendees will be able to share 2 organizations that recommend breastfeeding beyond a year

**Education: Why are there so many myths about breastfeeding?**

Breastfeeding is a very individual journey, and everyone has a different experience. People have shared their past experiences and these perceptions have become reality. Myths have circulated and been passed down from generation to generation. As a nation, we went from almost everyone breastfeeding to only 22% of babies getting any breastmilk in the early 1970s. We are finally seeing the surge of breastfeeding and with over 86% of women surveyed wanting to breastfeed, the demand for accurate information has produced great evidence-based research.

**1. Myth: Breastfeeding is easy.**

Babies are born with the reflex to look for their mother's breast. However, many mothers need practical support with positioning their baby for breastfeeding and making sure their baby is correctly attached to the breast. Breastfeeding can be challenging in the early days postpartum. It takes time and practice for both mothers and babies to learn to breastfeed. The best thing to do is practice often and seek professional help if necessary.

**2. Myth: Breastfeeding will hurt, and sore nipples are normal.**

Many mothers experience discomfort in the first few days after birth when they are learning to breastfeed. If the baby has an incorrect latch, the rubbing and pinching can cause pain and discomfort or tenderness. With the right support with positioning, sore nipples can be avoided. Baby should be taking the nipple far into his mouth and nothing should be rubbing or pinching on the breast.

**3. Myth: Nipples need to be washed prior to feeding.**

Washing nipples before breastfeeding isn't necessary. When babies are born, they are already very familiar with their own mother's smells and sounds. The Montgomery glands (small bumps on the areola) produce a substance that the baby smells and has 'good bacteria' that helps to build babies' own healthy immune system for life. This scent also draws Baby to the breast and works as Baby's GPS system.

**4. Myth: Baby should be taken to the nursery for Mom can rest or breastfeeding moms don't get enough sleep.**

Mom and Baby should only be separated if it is medically necessary. Keep Baby skin-to-skin so you can learn your baby's cues and latch him often. Baby should be kept undisturbed for one hour after birth to initiate feeding. Moms and babies both get better rest together.

Research shows that breastfeeding moms get more sleep! They don't have to go to the kitchen to prepare a bottle. When Moms breastfeed, their milk is readily available at the right amount and temperature for their baby.

**5. Myth: You should only eat bland food while breastfeeding.**

Like everybody else, breastfeeding mothers need to eat a balanced diet. In general, there is no need to change eating habits. Babies are exposed to their mothers' food preferences from the time they are in the womb. If a mother perceives that her baby reacts to a specific food she eats, she can keep a food diary and avoid foods that seem to cause a reaction.

**6. Myth: Exercise will affect the taste of your milk.**

Excessive exercise can cause lactic acid in the milk, but lactic acid does not deter babies from breastfeeding, and it is not harmful. Exercise is healthy, also for breastfeeding mothers. There is no evidence that it affects the taste of your milk.

**7. Myth: You only have a "Golden Hour" to breastfeed and if you miss the window, your nursing journey will end.**

It is easier to get breastfeeding started if you begin in the first hour after birth because a baby's reflexes are very strong at that time. They are ready to learn to feed at the breast. If you do not latch your baby on right after birth, do it as soon as possible. If you need help putting your baby to the breast, ask for support from a qualified lactation consultant or other skilled professional. Frequent skin-to-skin contact and putting your baby to the breast will help to get breastfeeding going.

**8. Myth: You can never supplement with formula if you want to breastfeed.**

Mothers may decide they need to use formula on some occasions, while continuing to breastfeed. Some moms supplement by choice and some need to offer formula for additional calories because their body does not produce enough milk. When someone breastfeeds and formula feeds it is called "mixed" or "combo" feeding. It is important to seek unbiased information on formula and other products that replace breastmilk. To keep breastmilk production going, continue offering the breast to your baby as often as possible. It can be useful for mothers to consult a lactation specialist or skilled professional to help with a plan and determine how much supplantation is necessary.

**9. Myth: Many people can't produce enough milk.**

Almost all mothers produce the right amount of milk for their babies. Breastmilk production is supported by how well the baby is latched on to the breast, the frequency of breastfeeding and how well the baby is removing milk with each feeding. Some medical diagnosis, hormonal conditions and medications affect supply. If anyone suspects insufficient milk, they should seek out clinical support from an IBCLC.

**10. Myth: You shouldn't breastfeed if you're sick.**

Depending on the kind of illness, mothers can usually continue breastfeeding when they're sick. You need to make sure you get the right treatment, rest, eat and drink well. In many cases, the antibodies your body makes to treat your disease or illness will pass on to your baby, building their own defenses.

**11. Myth: You can't take any medication if you're breastfeeding.**

It's important to inform your doctor that you are breastfeeding and to read the instructions regarding any medications you buy over the counter. It might be necessary to take medications at a specific time or in a specific dosage, or to take an alternative formulation. You should also tell the baby's doctor about any medications that you're taking.

**12. Myth: Babies who have been breastfed are clingy.**

All babies are different. Some are clingy and some are not, no matter how they are fed. Breastfeeding provides not only the best nutrition for infants but is also important for their developing brain. Breastfed babies are held a lot and because of this, breastfeeding has been shown to enhance bonding with their mother and produce more independent children.

**13. You won't make enough milk the first few days.**

The milk you make in those early days is called colostrum or "liquid gold." This milk is packed with all the nutrients your baby needs. It is small in volume but enough to keep your newborn's tiny tummy full. Nursing every time your baby is hungry will help to ensure your baby is getting enough and will also build your milk supply.

**14. Myth: It's hard to wean a baby if you breastfeed for more than a year.**

The AAP, World Health Organization, CDC and other help entities all recommend breastfeeding beyond a year. There's no evidence that it is more difficult to stop breastfeeding after one year, but there is evidence that breastfeeding up to two years is beneficial for both mothers and children. All mothers and babies are different and need to determine together how long they want to breastfeed.

**15. Myth: If you go back to work, you'll have to wean your baby.**

Many mothers continue breastfeeding after going back to work. First, check the policies in your country and your own workplace. The Workplace Accommodation Law grants the right to all employees to have a place (other than a restroom) and time to pump milk for your baby.

**16. Myth: Breastfeeding makes breasts saggy.**

Breastfeeding is not to blame. Research shows that hormonal and weight fluctuations during pregnancy are the main cause of breast changes. Aging and your family's genetics also play a role.

**17. Myth: All moms feel happy after giving birth.**

Many new moms, up to 80 percent of them in fact, feel sad, stressed, and overwhelmed in the days after birth — this is called "the baby blues." A mom with baby blues may also have decreased appetite, irritability, and anxiety. These symptoms tend to get better on their own before the end of the second week.

If the symptoms do not get better or become worse, contact your Medical Provider. Some people suffer from Postpartum Depression caused by a combination of hormonal shifts, lack of sleep and the adjustment to becoming a parent. Postpartum depression can be treated with breastfeeding-safe medications and counseling.

**18. Myth: If Baby cries, he isn't getting enough milk.**

Babies cry to communicate. While they may be hungry, babies also cry if they are too hot, too cold, have a dirty diaper, feel overstimulated, are tired or just want to be held. If your baby seems to be crying more than you think is normal or you feel your baby is not getting enough to eat, call your pediatrician.

Additional Resources: [Infantrisk.com](https://www.infantrisk.com) for medications, Texas Health and Human Services

<https://www.breastmilkcounts.com/getting-prepared/myths-and-facts-about-breastfeeding/>