

When Baby Won't Latch

It is important for you to spend as much time as possible with your baby. Being with your baby both day and night will help you learn about your baby and respond to their needs.

Suggestions to help your baby latch:

- Undress your baby and place baby skin-to-skin. Skin-to-skin contact helps your baby find the breast.
- Watch your baby for early feeding cues, such as fists to mouth, rooting, turning head side to side, sucking, or restlessness.
- Be sure that your baby feeds at least 8 times in 24 hours.
- Massage the breast and hand express colostrum/breastmilk onto your nipple before trying to latch your baby. This helps your baby to find the nipple.
- Calm your baby if he/she cries or arches away while you are trying to latch.
- Try different positions and offer each breast at every feeding.
- Work with your baby for short periods of time.

If your baby does not latch:

- Keep your practice sessions short, under 15 minutes.
- Offer each breast several times throughout the day and night.
- Calm your baby if he/she becomes upset, skin-to-skin contact may help.
- Feed your baby expressed breastmilk and try breastfeeding at the next feeding. If expressed breastmilk is not available, use donor milk from a human milk bank or commercially prepared formula.
- Learning to breastfeed takes time. Be patient with yourself and your baby.
- If your baby does not latch, or latches for only a short period of time, express your breastmilk until your breasts soften and your milk no longer flows.

If your baby latches:

- Watch your baby suck at your breast. You should notice quick short sucks at first then slow deep sucks with brief pauses as your baby swallows. Listen for swallowing.
- Use massage and breast compression to help your milk flow. This will help your baby continue sucking.
- If your baby falls asleep at the breast try changing the diaper, burping or using gentle massage.
- If your baby feeds well at the breast, you can gradually reduce how often you remove milk from your breast.

If you need help contact a lactation consultant or health care provider who is skilled with helping breastfeeding mothers.

References

- 1) Mannel, R., Martens, P., Walker, M. (2013) *Core Curriculum for Lactation Consultant Practice Third Edition*. Burlington, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning.
- 2) Morbacher, N. (2010) *Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple: A Guide for Helping Mothers*. Amarillo Texas: Hale Publishing, L.P.
- 3) Wambach, K., & Riordan, J. (2016) *Breastfeeding and Human Lactation Fifth Edition*. Boston, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning.

Developed by the Middlesex London Breastfeeding Coalition with representation from London Health Sciences Centre, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital, and the Middlesex London Health Unit, Elgin St. Thomas Public Health,
May 2008, Revised September 2012, September 2017