

Sister Lilian Report

Kaj Nursing Shirt - short sleeve

Sister Lilian, leading pregnancy and parenting advisor and author, writes about getting off to a successful nursing start in the early days.

To nurse a baby with ease, one should believe in and practice a few simple things from the moment after birth. Put baby to the breast as soon as possible as their instinct to feed and establish a good pattern at the breast is strongly developed in the minutes and hours following delivery. Babies follow their rooting instincts and 'crawl' up mom's abdomen toward the breast after birth.

The mother's distinctive smell helps the process too. Infants can tell their mother apart from many others based on their sense of smell-recognition. Many moms are concerned how they will know if baby is hungry or not – infants will let mom know by an increasingly strident cry and nuzzling at her chest, as they smell the source of her milk very accurately.

Most breast babies need to feed frequently in the early months. The duration of each feed becomes shorter from approximately four months. In the first few days when colostrum is produced, one should simply feed baby as needed – this might be anything from hourly to five hourly. In the event of special health challenges like very big babies or those with diabetic mothers, nursing needs to be at least every three hours. Once breast milk comes in from about Day Three, two hourly feeding is very common, with the occasional longer gap of 3 or 4 hours.

Each breastfeed tends to occur in 'courses', baby often needing to feed three or four times to complete a feed, with a little nap or a soiled diaper between 'courses'. Nursing often includes an 'after dinner mint' of just a few sips before settling down for that longer sleep! Babies are a lot like adults - each one is an individual, some picky or slow eaters, some guzzling everything down all in one go, others constant grazers. Try as one might, one cannot do much about these inherent patterns! Understanding this and accepting baby's pattern gracefully and then building a practical routine around this works best each time.