

Feeding Your Baby in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU)



Benefits of Breast Milk for Your Baby

Breast milk provides many benefits for babies, especially babies who are premature or ill. Your milk can protect your baby against infections, is easily digested, and can reduce the severity of some allergies. It may also help with the development of your baby's brain, nervous system and eyes. We encourage all mothers to pump their breast milk, whether they wish to breastfeed long term or only while their baby is in the NICU.

Lactation Support at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center's NICU

A team of physicians, nurses, dietitians and lactation consultants will implement an individualized plan of care based on the needs of you and your baby. All of our lactation consultants are registered nurses with special training in lactation and breastfeeding. They can help you with pumping concerns, storing breast milk, and latching your baby at the breast. We have hospital-grade breast pumps available for mothers to use.

Lactation support will be available at the birth hospital to help mothers who aren't able to come to Cincinnati Children's.

Pumping and Storing Breast Milk

Start pumping your breast milk as soon as you can after giving birth. Pump every 2–3 hours for about 15–20 minutes. It is normal to only get drops at first. It often takes 2 to 5 days to start getting more milk.

Label each bottle with your baby's name, date and time of pumping, and any medications, herbs or vitamins that you are taking. Bottles of pumped breast milk need to be refrigerated. In addition, if you need to store milk for more than 48 hours, place bottles in the freezer until they can be brought to the NICU.

When you or a family member come to Cincinnati Children's, please bring your pumped breast milk and give it to your baby's nurse. The NICU staff will assist in properly storing your pumped breast milk.

Lactation Consultant—a registered nurse who has additional education in breastfeeding and lactation. She can help you with pumping concerns or latching your baby at the breast.

Neonatal Nutritionist—a registered dietitian (RD) who is an expert in the nutrition of babies. Premature or other high-risk newborns have unique nutrition needs and the neonatal nutritionist's role is to work with you and the NICU team to ensure those needs are met.

Contact Cincinnati Children's NICU at **513-636-4466** or **1-800-227-5560**