

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, her eyes closed, gently kissing the forehead of a newborn baby. The baby is wrapped in a pink blanket and is lying on a light blue textured blanket. The background is softly blurred, suggesting a hospital setting.

**The
Hospital**

Experience

A pregnant woman wearing a teal, textured top is shown from the waist down. She is holding a green notebook and a pen in her right hand. Her left hand is resting on her pregnant belly. In the foreground, there is a basket filled with baby clothes, including a pink sock and a red sock. The background is dark and out of focus.

Your Pregnancy

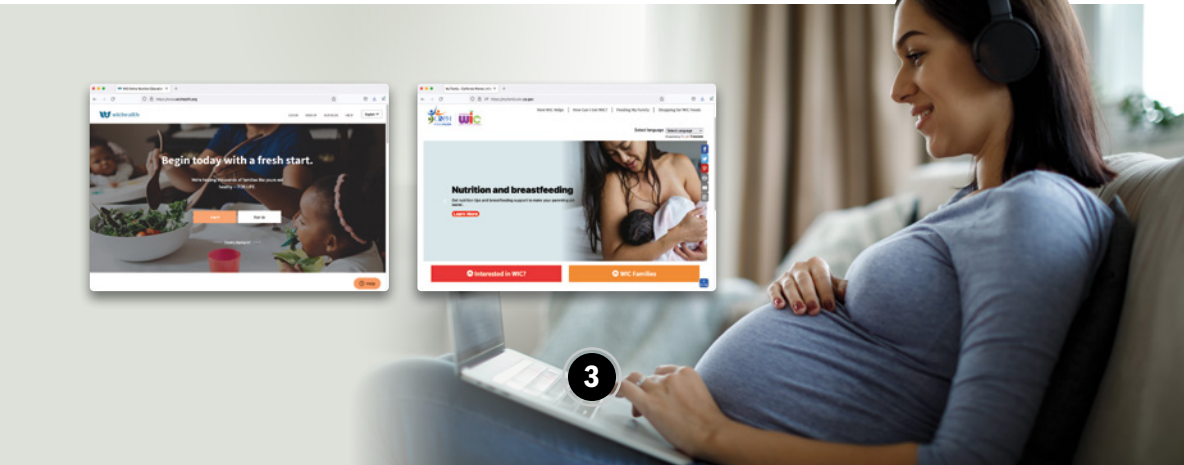
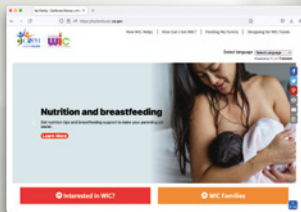
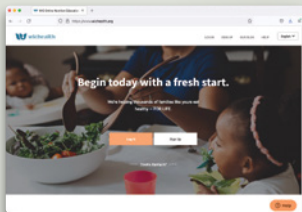
Know What to Expect

Learn as Much as You Can About Feeding Your Newborn

The decision of how to feed your baby is a big one. The more you learn about feeding your newborn, the more confident and comfortable you will be after your baby is born. WIC is here to help!

Before you have your baby:

- Take prenatal classes through your local hospital and WIC office, or online at wichealth.org.
- Read through the infant feeding resources on MyFamily.WIC.ca.gov including [The WIC Guide to Breastfeeding](#).
- Learn how to feed your baby and how your WIC office staff can help if you have questions or concerns.
- Call the number on your health plan card to find out what breastfeeding services and supplies are covered.



Feed Only Breastmilk in the Hospital

Exclusive breastfeeding is a term WIC uses that means your baby is getting only your breastmilk. Parents who exclusively feed breastmilk get more WIC benefits for longer to support their nutrition and health.

It is normal and okay to feel nervous about feeding your baby at first. WIC is here to help! Breastfeeding takes practice—just like learning a new dance. It gets easier as your baby grows.

WIC recognizes that not everyone chooses to use the term breastfeeding. Some parents might prefer the term chestfeeding. Let your WIC counselor know what term you would like to use.



A newborn's tummy size is very small. So, when you are in the hospital and it seems like only a little bit of breastmilk comes out, do not worry. Your body knows just what to do. The more you breastfeed or remove breastmilk by pumping, the more milk you make.

By day 3–4, when you are home from the hospital, the amount of milk your body is making will increase. Your milk is changing to meet your baby's changing needs as their stomach grows. After the first week or two, your milk will change again to meet your baby's needs. Your breasts may feel less full, but you will still be making all the milk your baby needs. The WIC program promotes and supports feeding only breastmilk for the first 6 months with continued breastfeeding through the first year and beyond.

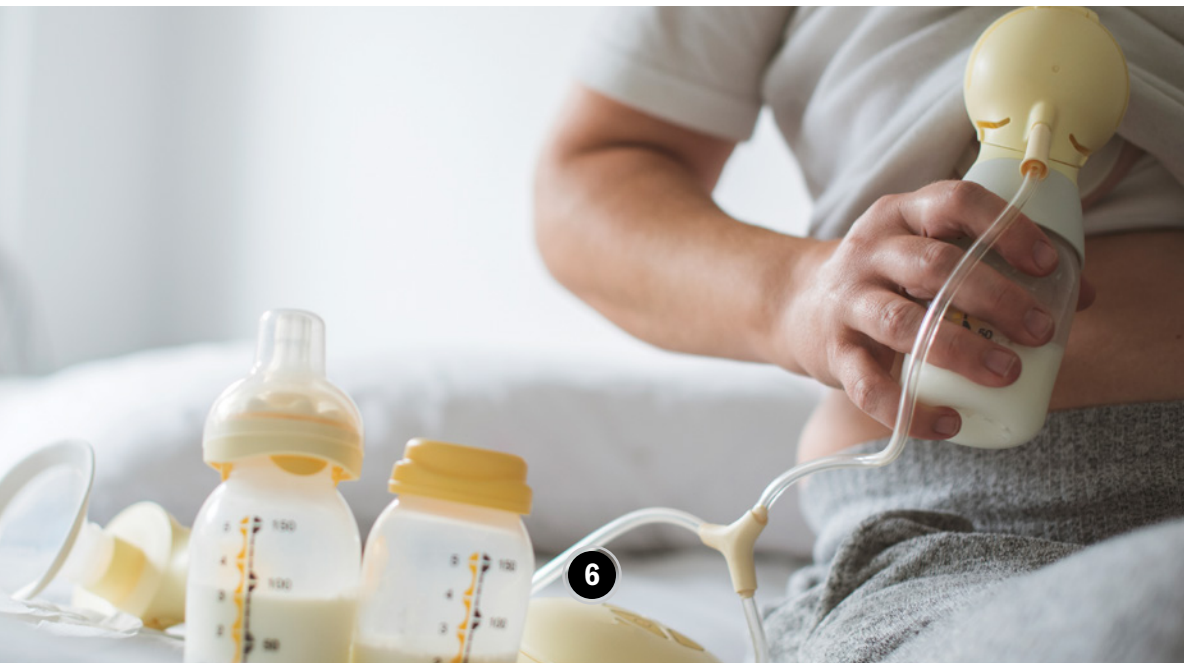


Are You Planning to Pump Your Breastmilk?

Call your health plan member services while you are pregnant if you plan to pump for an extended amount of time. If you cannot get a pump from your health plan, contact WIC to see if you will be able to get a pump once your baby is born.



If your baby is unable to breastfeed or you are choosing to pump, it is important to begin pumping within 6 hours of delivery. Use a double electric pump and ask your nurse or breastfeeding specialist for help. They can teach you how to use the pump and how to combine pumping with hand expression to increase your milk supply.



At the Hospital

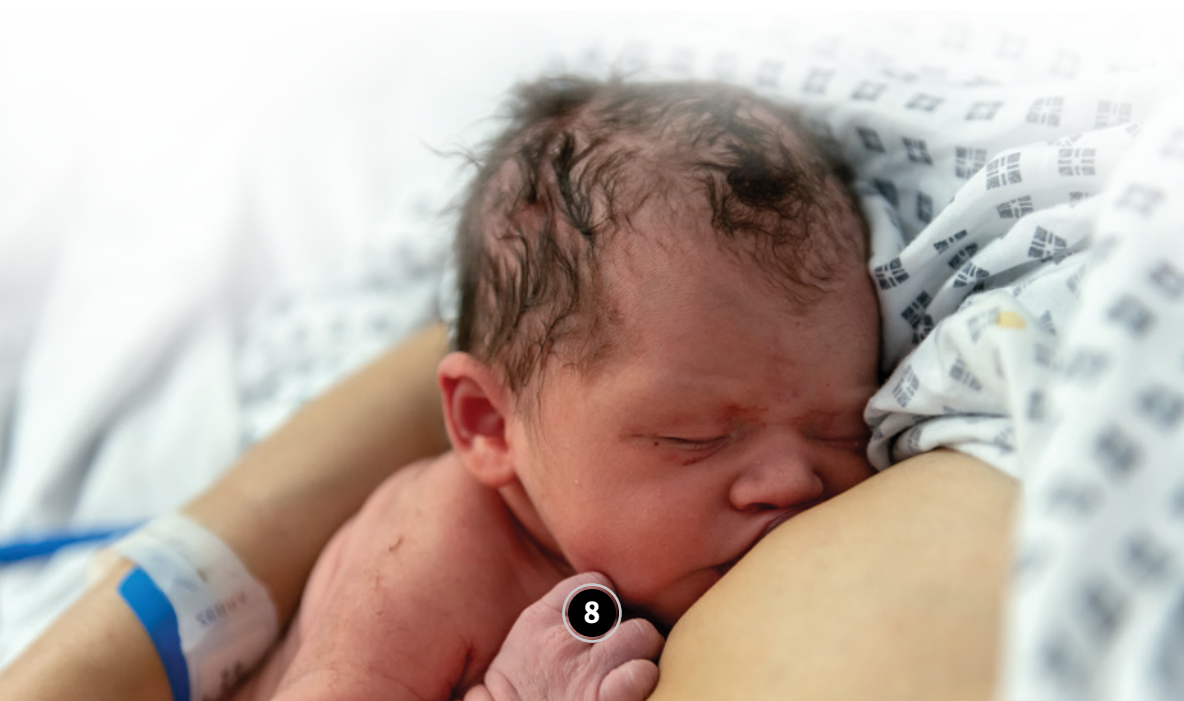
Know What to Expect



Feed Your Baby Breastmilk As Soon As Possible After Delivery

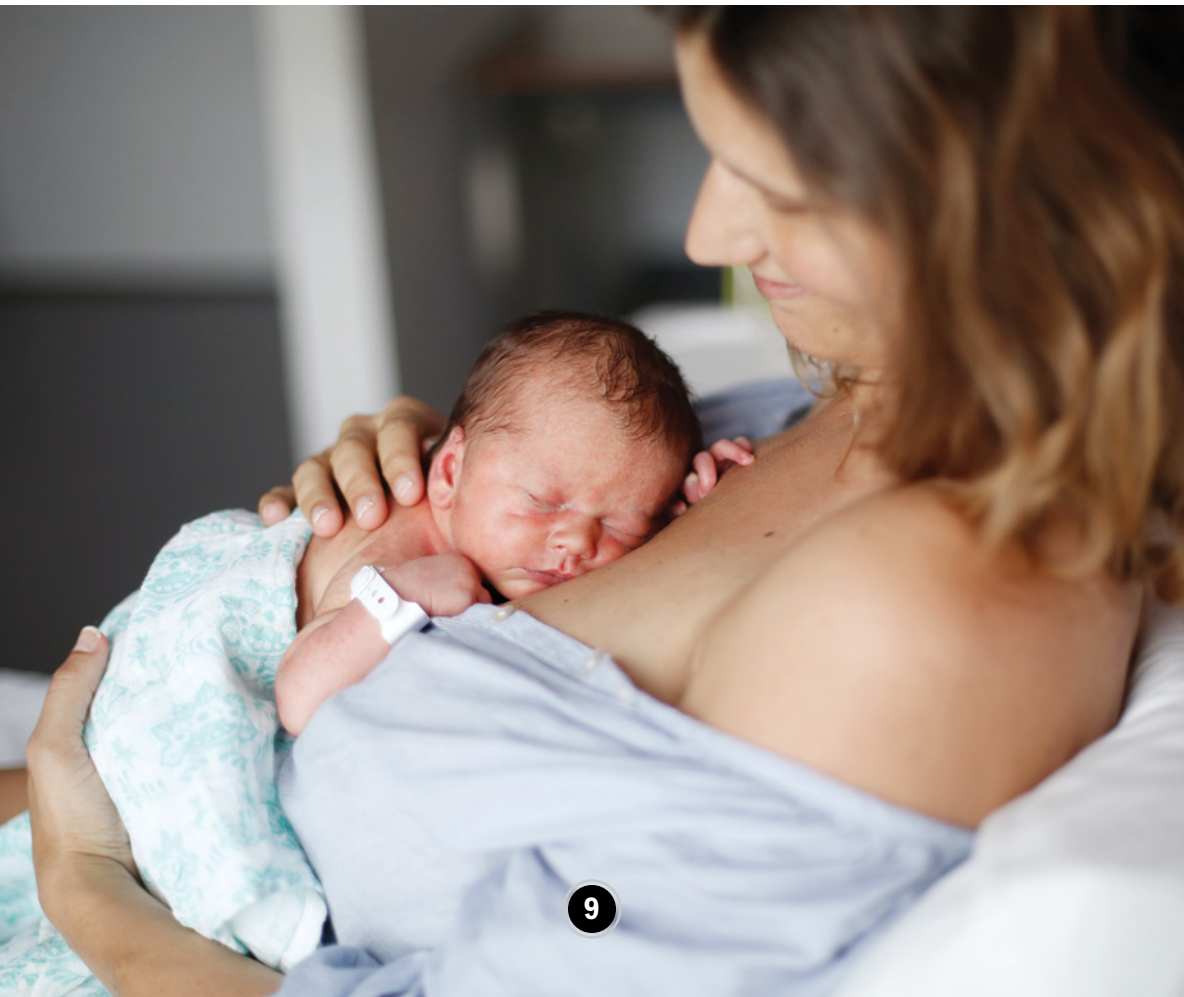
The hour right after your baby's birth is often called *The Golden Hour*. That is because you and your baby are both eager and ready to meet each other. Your baby is also most alert and looking to breastfeed. Make the most of this time and feed your baby often to help build your milk supply.

After a few hours, your baby will become very sleepy and harder to wake to breastfeed. With a cesarean delivery you can breastfeed your baby right after birth as long as you and your baby are well. If you are not with your baby, ask your partner to help hold or soothe your baby. Ask the staff to delay feeding anything else, if possible, until you are with your baby again for breastfeeding.



Practice Skin-to-skin Care

Babies can be placed on your chest right after birth for at least an hour and then as often as they like after that. Skin-to-skin care is when you keep your baby dressed only in a diaper and cap against your bare skin, with a blanket covering your baby's back. Your baby can stay in skin-to-skin for the newborn medical check-up as long as you both are well.



Skin-to-skin benefits your baby by:

- Regulating their heart rate, breathing, and temperature.
- Giving your baby the good bacteria found on your skin, which helps to protect your baby.
- Calming, warming, and comforting your baby which makes your baby feel safe.
- Creating a strong bond between the two of you.
- Guiding your baby to the breast for feeding.

If you are separated from your baby, your family and partner can do skin-to-skin with your baby too.



Limit Your Visitors

Too many visitors can overwhelm your baby. They will cry to tell you they are upset. This can affect how well and often they want to eat. Most babies will eat 8 or more times in a 24-hour period. There will be plenty of staff coming in and out of your room. Staff include your nurses and doctors, staff with birth certificate papers, the hearing screen staff, housekeeping, and others. Limiting your personal visitors will cut down on distractions leaving more time for feeding and bonding with your baby.



How to handle visitors while breastfeeding:

- Ask them to knock and wait for a reply before entering your room. Make a little sign to take with you to the hospital that you can hang on the door.
- Tell them you will be breastfeeding often and using skin-to-skin care with your baby between feedings.

It is your choice who visits and when! You will have plenty of time for visitors once you are home.



Keep Your Baby in the Same Room with You

Rooming-in is good for all babies no matter how they are fed. Babies feel safest when you are near them. You will rest better, too, which helps with healing.

If your baby has to be taken away for a procedure, send your partner or family along to keep your baby calm.



Rooming-in:

- Includes the family as part of the care team which builds confidence and parenting skills.
- Lets you respond to your baby right away, which helps your baby feel safe and calm.
- Better protects your baby against outside germs.



Avoid Giving Pacifiers If You Are Breastfeeding

Early use of pacifiers can keep you from making a good milk supply.

A pacifier may be used to comfort your baby during painful procedures like blood sampling or circumcisions. As soon as your baby is back with you, remove the pacifier and calm your baby by breastfeeding. Wait to use pacifiers until your milk supply is well established after a few weeks.



Be Aware of Formula Advertising

You may receive free gifts from formula companies including diaper bags, coupons, or formula. You do not have to take the gifts or use the formula if you are feeding only breastmilk. Using even some of the formula from these offers can reduce your breastmilk supply.



3 Newborn Secrets

Know How to Respond



1

Your first breastmilk is enough for your baby.

- Your first milk is called colostrum. It comes from your breasts in small drops.
- Colostrum coats your baby's insides and helps prevent allergies, viruses, and infections.
- Your newborn can only eat a little at a time.
- You may not feel changes in your breasts right away. Your body is still making breastmilk.
- Around day 3, you may start to feel fullness in your breasts. Your body will make just what your baby needs.



2

Learning to breastfeed takes time.

- Ask for help with breastfeeding early and often.
- Be patient, it can take several days for babies to learn to eat well at the breast. Luckily, babies learn quickly.
- Hold baby close to calm them when upset and try to feed again later.
- Ask your WIC counselor more about hunger cues. Learn more about hunger and fullness cues on [page 21](#).



3

It is normal for babies to cry more on day 2.

- Babies will be more awake on day 2. Feed them whenever you see hunger cues. Learn more about hunger and fullness cues on [page 21](#).
- Your baby is getting used to the noise, lights, people, and diaper changes.
- A lot of activity can overwhelm babies and make feeding harder. They will cry to tell you they are upset.
- As babies get used to their new world, they will cry less.



Soothing repetition, gently doing the same thing over and over, calms babies. It may take some time to calm your baby, especially when they are very upset. Keep with it!

Try:

- Rocking, swaying, gently patting
- Speaking or singing softly
- Gently massaging back, arms, legs

Learn more at [Getting to Know Your Baby](#).



How Your Baby Communicates with You

All babies use cues to tell you what they need. These cues can mean they are tired, hungry, sleepy, in pain, or that they are full. Teach your family what your baby's cues look like.

Hunger Cues

When your baby is ready to eat, they will show early hunger cues like:



Keeps hands near mouth



Searches for nipple



Bends arms and legs toward body



Makes sucking noises



Puckers lips

Fullness Cues

When your baby is ready to stop, they will show fullness cues like:



Falls asleep



Pushes away from you or the feeding



Sucks slower or stops sucking



Relaxes hands and arms

Crying

Mothers often feel that crying means their baby is hungry. Crying also means “I need something to be different” such as:



Tired and want to rest



Bothered by noise or lights or need a diaper change



Having pain and need to be held or burped



Hungry and early hunger cues were missed



Too hot or cold



At the Hospital

Know What to Ask

Ask for Breastfeeding Help Before You Leave the Hospital

Even if you think breastfeeding is going well, it is good to check in with your nurse or ask to see a lactation consultant. They can look at how the baby is positioned and latched. They can also give you tips on how to avoid soreness and how to know when your baby is hungry or full. If your baby is not latching well, ask for help in hand expressing your colostrum into your baby's mouth or into a container.

A good latch will help prevent nipple pain, help baby gain weight, and help you make more milk. [The WIC Guide to Breastfeeding](#) has some tips.



What is Uterine Cramping?

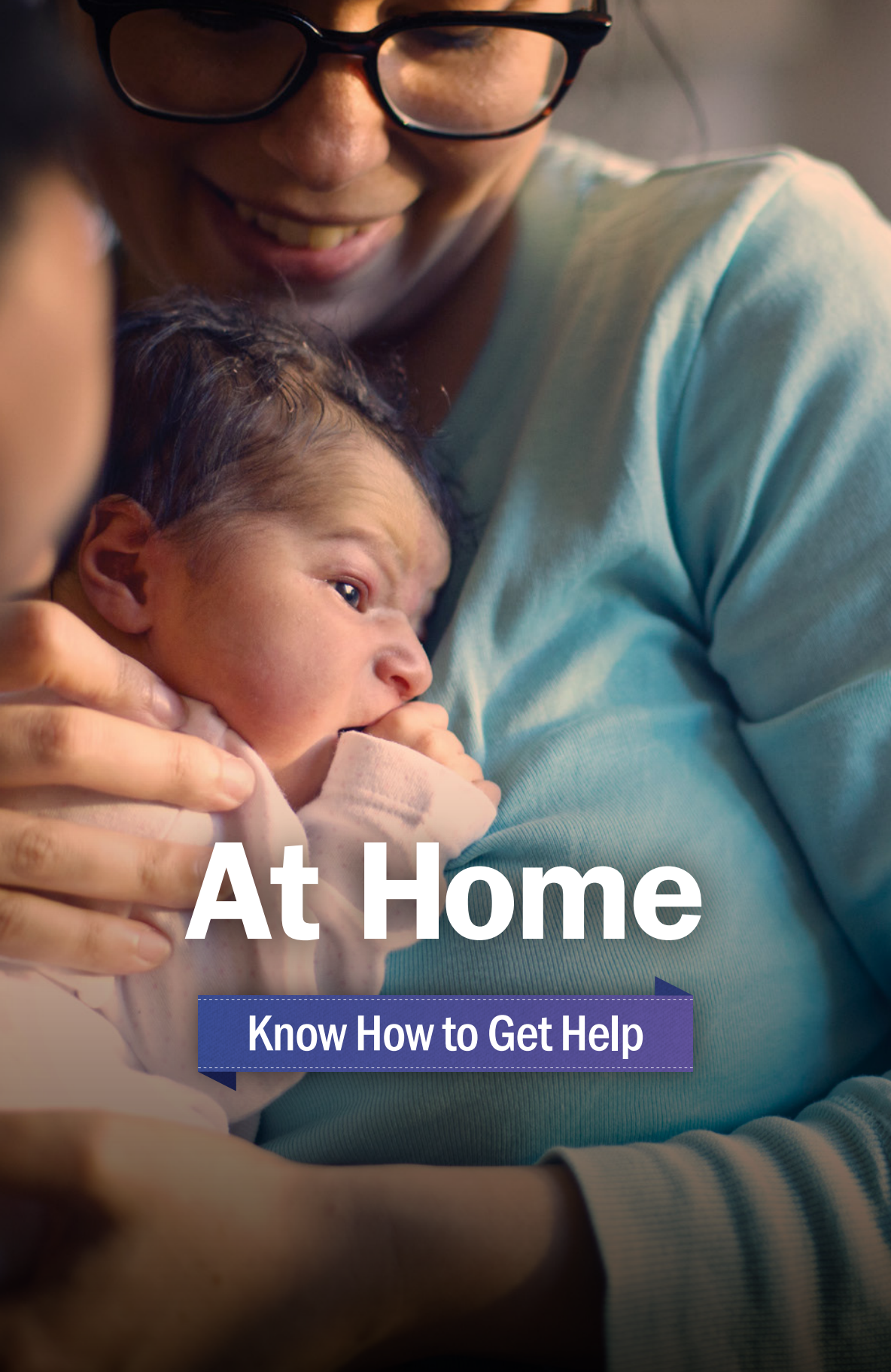


After having your baby you may experience cramping during breastfeeding. The cramping may feel like menstrual cramps or a milder version of the uterine cramping you experienced during labor. This is your uterus returning to its pre-pregnancy size. Cramping during breastfeeding will lessen as your body recovers.

What About Birth Control?



Hormonal birth control such as progestin-only shots, implants and intrauterine devices (IUDs) are commonly used. These options might be offered to you by your doctor before you leave the hospital. Hormonal birth control options may affect your breastmilk supply if used within the first few weeks. Talk with your doctor at your postpartum visit about birth control options that will work best for you while feeding breastmilk.



At Home

Know How to Get Help

Ask About Hospital Support

Some hospitals offer breastfeeding support services after you go home.

These might include:

- Visits to check baby's weight or feeding
- Support group meetings
- Breastfeeding support contact numbers

Ask your nurse what is offered from your hospital before you leave. Do not be afraid to ask for help.



Get Help from WIC

WIC staff can answer your infant feeding questions—just call or text! Some WIC offices have Breastfeeding Peer Counselors. These are WIC moms who breastfed their babies and who have been trained to help moms breastfeed. They can answer questions about WIC services and tell you about other assistance programs. They also can talk through any concerns you have about feeding your baby. If available, meet with a Peer Counselor during your pregnancy and request their contact information. Right after your baby is born, call WIC staff to let them know! They can get you support for whatever you need.



Involve Family and Friends

After childbirth you will need time to rest and recover. There are many things your support people—your family and friends—can do to help. Share the information you get from WIC with the people who will be helping you when your baby gets here.

Think about who can help you with:

- Answering your questions about feeding your baby
- Providing premade meals
- Taking care of the baby while you shower or nap
- Doing laundry or dishes
- Babysitting older children
- Listening and giving emotional support





California Department of Public Health, California WIC program

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

1-888-942-9675 | MyFamily.WIC.ca.gov

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