



Breastfeeding: Help Baby Get a Good Latch

Latch is the way your baby's mouth holds on to your breast as she nurses. If it's a good latch, your baby gets milk and it doesn't hurt your nipples. Some babies get onto the nipple and *areola* (the dark area around the nipple) without much trouble. Others need help to get a good latch. Here are some suggestions for getting your baby onto your breast with a good latch:

1. Bring your baby to your breast. Hold her so she's facing your breast without turning her head. If you are holding her in a cradle hold, think "belly to belly". This helps keep her head in the right position.
2. Hold your baby close with your hand under her head (near her neck) and your arm against her back. (This is the alternate cradle hold.)
3. With your other hand, hold your breast. Make this hand into a C shape and put your thumb on your breast at the edge of the areola. Then put your fingers at the edge of the areola on the other side of your breast. Don't touch your areola. Next, gently squeeze your fingers and thumb together making a "breast sandwich."
4. Stroke your baby's lips with your nipple to get her to open her mouth wide.
5. When her mouth is open WIDE, put your areola onto her lower lip. Then quickly roll her onto your breast. Make sure she has both the nipple and a lot of the areola in her mouth.
6. With a good latch, her lower jaw and chin press against your breast and her nose almost touches it.
7. Let your baby suckle for as long as she likes. (10–20 minutes is common.) She may come off your breast on her own. If she still wants to eat, offer your other breast. She may nurse from 1 breast or both.

If your baby doesn't get a large part of the areola in her mouth, your nipple will probably hurt. So, take her off and try again. To take your baby off your breast, slip your finger into her mouth to break the suction. Then pull her away from your breast. Before long, you and your baby will get a good latch every time. Remember, you need to have a good latch to keep your nipples from getting sore and cracked.

For more information on pregnancy:

See our books: *Pregnancy, Childbirth & the Newborn* or *The Simple Guide to Having a Baby*.
Take a childbirth preparation class at Great Starts, or in your local community.

For parenting tips, information for families, or to talk to someone about parenting:

In Washington State: Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

Outside of WA: contact your local Circle of Parents agency at www.circleofparents.org

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