

Positioning Your Baby

Babies appear to have instincts that help them latch to the breast and feed. However, this does not mean that all babies will latch well. Certain positions appear to help babies latch. You may want to try several before you find the one that works the best for you and your baby.

Here are a few hints that may help no matter what position is used:

- Try to anticipate when your baby might be ready to feed and offer the breast before your baby starts crying. If baby is screaming, you may find that swaddling or letting baby suck on your finger will calm baby down in order to latch. Skin to skin contact may also help to calm a young baby.
- Avoid leaning over to nurse baby. Instead, bring baby to your breast.
- Support your baby's back (spine), neck and lower shoulders, more than baby's head. Holding the back of baby's head often will push baby's nose into the breast, which pulls baby's chin away from the breast resulting in shallow latch.
- Wait for baby to open wide before pulling baby to your breast.
- Position baby so that the chin comes to the breast first and stays pressed into the breast. This will help your baby get more of the lower breast than the upper breast in his/her mouth. This allows baby's tongue to compress the breast and not the nipple.

Under the Arm, Clutch, or Football Hold

This hold often works well when mom is trying to get baby's weight off a Cesarean incision or when mom has larger breasts.

Sit on a comfortable sofa or in a recliner. Put a pillow to the side of your breast under your arm and another behind your back. Tuck your baby underneath your arm. Baby's legs can be bent at the hips to keep baby from pushing away with his/ her feet. Pick up your breast and position it on your baby's chest. Baby's face will be very close to the breast. This close contact often stimulates a baby to open wide. When baby opens wide, gently bring your baby forward just slightly so that baby's chin touches the breast first.



Cross Cradle Hold

This position is helpful for some babies who struggle to latch deeply and benefit from very direct guidance to the breast.

Use a pillow to bring baby up to the height of the breast. When latching to left breast: Support your baby's neck and shoulders with your right hand and cradle baby's body with your arm. Use your hand to support your left breast. As baby opens wide, bring baby's chin into the breast first. Once baby is suckling comfortably, you may be able to remove your hand from the breast. It may help to tuck a pillow under the breast to continue to keep the breast supported and deep in baby's mouth.



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Self-Attachment

This position seems to promote a newborn's feeding instincts the best.

When a baby is placed naked on mother's stomach immediately after birth, instinctive arm and leg motions help the baby to crawl toward the breasts. When the baby feels a breast with one cheek, it will cause the baby to turn toward the breast and "root," or open the mouth wide, often lunging toward the breast. If the nipple is not grasped, the baby will crawl up further and try again. If your baby has had difficulty latching to the breast in the "traditional" positions, this can be a very helpful method for the baby to "start over", taking advantage of natural instincts.

Recline back on pillows (or in a recliner), open or take off your shirt and place baby on his/her tummy in the middle of your chest. This will often calm a crying newborn or wake a sleepy newborn. If baby is only wearing a diaper, your baby will like the skin-to-skin contact and will usually lift up his/her head and look for the breast. This position "supports" baby's arms which is reassuring to baby. Circle your arms around baby, supporting baby's back. You may find that once baby latches to your breast that baby's head will rest against your arm that is cradled around baby.



Cradle Hold

This is a typical hold for an older baby or a newborn who latches easily. It also is more convenient when you are nursing out in public.

You may put a pillow on your lap, or underneath the arm next to the breast that you plan to feed on. Baby's body may rest on the pillow on your lap, or may rest on your body. When latching to breast, hold baby across your lap – baby's feet on the side of your body. Rest baby's head on your forearm, allowing his/her head to lean back over your arm. This will position your baby's chin closest to the breast. Keep baby's body tucked in close to yours. You may use your hand to reach over and move the breast to line up with baby's mouth or press gently on the top side of your breast so that baby's chin can easily get underneath the breast for a deep latch.



Babies tend to improve their latch as they mature and grow. Some babies will latch better when you try a different position. Other babies may simply need more time. Certain babies may need the help of a breastfeeding tool or intervention to latch so that they can remove milk comfortably and well. If you have a painful latch, do not leave your baby at the breast. Please pump if necessary and see a lactation consultant to help determine how to feed your baby and maintain your supply while your baby learns to latch without pain.

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