



Bayside Medical Group, Inc.

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BREASTFEEDING DIFFICULTY

## When You're Having Difficulty Breastfeeding: Poor Latching, or Sleepy Baby, or Not Enough Milk

**W**e all have an ideal scenario in our heads with nursing—the baby attaches to mother's breast comfortably, nurses whenever they are hungry, becomes full, and blissfully sleeps the rest of the time. And many times it does happen that way. But lots of times it doesn't. Sometimes the problem is that the baby doesn't latch onto your breasts well, or that the latch on is fine, but the baby poops out on you. The good news is that with a bit of energy and work, these problems can be fixed.

First, let's address latching on. When you put your nipple into the baby's mouth, make sure that his or her mouth is open very wide, and the breast goes in pretty fully. It should feel totally comfortable to you. If baby is nursing well and actively with a good latch, keep going as long as you can. Switch breasts after about 15-20 minutes on the first breast. If latching on was the trouble and this fixes it, you might as well stop reading; you're out of the woods.

But sometimes the problem is that the baby is having difficulty staying awake. We want the baby to nurse for at least 15 minutes on the first breast, because the last part of the milk that is there, the so-called "hindmilk," is very rich in fat and calories. So, if the baby is pooping out, you can try to do breast massage and/or breast compressions to help keep baby actively nursing. If the nursing session is going well, keep it up. Again, if this solves your problem, you may discontinue reading.

Sometimes, however, neither of these maneuvers works. If this is happening, here is what we suggest. Stop nursing after 15 minutes, give the baby to your support person (father, partner, grandmother, best friend) and have them give the baby either pumped milk or formula with a bottle or SNS system. This will satisfy the baby and make sure he or she gets proper nutrition. Meanwhile,

while they are doing that, you pump both breasts with an electric (preferably hospital grade) pump for 15 minutes. Don't be discouraged if you don't get milk. The aim is to stimulate your breasts to produce milk, which can take a day or two or even more. The idea is to get your milk production up, and this procedure usually works.

After you have done this, you will have about an hour and a half until the next cycle begins again. This is a good time to rest and if you can, enjoy yourself. We know this is hard work, and you deserve the time off (try to minimize your tasks to accomplish, if you can). Then, about 2 hours from the start of the last feeding, the cycle can start again. If the baby isn't interested in feeding (especially if they just had a lot of formula 2 hours before), try for about 15 minutes, then pump as above.

The cycle might look like:

- 8:00–8:15 a.m.—try to breastfeed but having difficulty latching or baby staying awake
- 8:15–8:30 a.m.—baby gets fed pumped milk or formula while mother pumps both breasts
- 8:30–10 a.m.—mother rests and relaxes if possible
- 10 a.m.—try to nurse, repeat cycle.

Eventually, we can let baby get into their own rhythm of feeding, and as long as baby gets at least 8 feedings in 24 hours, that's fine. But for right now, if there are problems with the weight especially, it's good to try to feed every 2 hours from beginning of feed to beginning of feed.

Remember that this can be a tough time—hormones surge, making you feel tearful. It is do-able, and we are to help you. Things will get much better soon—hang in there! Also, if this is happening to you, we want to see you frequently in the office to check up on both of you.