

Breastfeeding After Breast Reduction Surgery

General Information

After breast reduction surgery, you can breastfeed your baby. You may be able to give your baby all the breastmilk he or she needs to grow. Or, you may be able to give formula along with breastmilk.

How much milk you can make depends on how your surgery was done.

Breast Reduction Surgery

Some of your breast tissue was taken out to make your breasts smaller. Because some milk-making tissue may have been taken out, you may make less milk.

Your nipples may have been moved during surgery. This can make it difficult for milk to flow out of your breasts. This can affect how much milk you can make.

Breastfeeding After Surgery

Breastfeed your baby often to help your body make milk. While you are in the hospital, your nurse will watch your baby closely to see if your baby is getting enough at your breast, or if your baby needs more.

Giving extra breastmilk or formula in addition to breastfeeding is called supplementation.

If you need to supplement your feedings, you will be able to choose how to give it — by bottle or by a special device called a supplemental nursing system. This is a bottle with tubes that you use during breastfeeding to give your baby extra breastmilk or formula.

If you need to supplement, it is important that you pump your breasts, even if you are breastfeeding. Pumping will help your breasts make the most milk possible.

After you leave the hospital, your baby's health care provider will watch your baby's weight closely to see if he or she is getting enough milk at your breast.

For More Information

If you are thinking about breastfeeding and you had breast reduction surgery, it may be helpful to:

- read “Defining Your Own Success: Breastfeeding After Breast Reduction Surgery by Diana West,” published by La Leche League International (lalecheleague.org)
- visit the bfar.org website for more information, resources and support
- talk with a lactation consultant before your baby's birth about:
 - getting off to a good start with breastfeeding
 - how to make the most milk
 - how to choose a supplement, if needed
 - how a supplemental nursing system works.

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What to Do After You Start Breastfeeding

After you start breastfeeding, it is important that you:

- tell your baby's health care provider about your breast surgery
- work with a lactation consultant to see how well breastfeeding is going
- learn how to recognize the signs that your baby is getting enough milk:
 - feeds 8 to 12 times in 24 hours
 - has bursts of sucking and swallowing
 - appears satisfied after feeding
 - there are enough soiled and wet diapers (at least 6 wet diapers a day after the first week; 3 or more soiled diapers a day by the third or fourth day)
 - regains his or her birth weight in 10 to 14 days.