Myths and Facts About Breastfeeding

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New parents and caregivers get a lot of baby advice. While most people mean well, not all of what's shared is based on research. Here are some common myths about breastfeeding, followed by the facts.

MYTH: If my baby nurses all the time that means they are not getting enough milk.

FACT: Your baby needs frequent feedings. Usually, 8-12 feedings over a 24-hour period. A healthy baby may nurse frequently. They may also cluster feed when going through a growth spurt. Your body will adjust to your child's needs. The more you nurse, the more milk your body produces.

MYTH: The amount of milk you pump shows how much milk you are producing.

FACT: The amount of milk you produce while pumping is different from breastfeeding. Your baby removes milk from your breast in a different way than the pump. Women with healthy milk supplies can have a hard time pumping much. A baby that nurses well will typically receive much more than what you can pump.

MYTH: If your breasts are small, you will not produce enough milk.

FACT: The size and shape of your breasts do not strongly affect your ability to breastfeed. Women with breasts and nipples of all shapes and sizes can breastfeed. Even women who've had breast surgery can nurse their babies. (Note: With some surgeries it's possible that milk ducts and glands have been removed. That could mean you'll make less milk.)

MYTH: If your breasts don't feel full you must have a low supply.

FACT: The full feeling when you start breastfeeding is temporary. At first your breasts haven't worked out how much milk to produce. They start by overproducing which makes them feel too full. They eventually settle down to a true supply and demand cycle.

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MYTH: Never let your baby use the breast as a pacifier.

FACT: Comfort nursing is normal. All babies need to suck, some more than others. Breastfeeding for both hunger and comfort is OK. This provides a unique bond with your child that can last a lifetime. Moms can choose how much to let their baby suck for comfort and can introduce a pacifier, if they prefer, after solid nursing habits are in place.

MYTH: Breastfeeding hurts.

FACT: Breastfeeding can hurt at first but should not be a painful experience once you get the hang of it. As with any new skill, there is an adjustment period. If pain continues, seek the help of a breastfeeding expert.

MYTH: All babies that drink formula sleep better.

FACT: Research shows that some babies who drink formula do sleep longer because formula doesn't get digested as quickly. But not all babies respond in this way and introducing formula can impact the breastfeeding relationship.

This content was developed by the Advocate Health HealthySteps team.

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