

MATERNITY

Diet & Nutrition

A healthy well planned diet is important for good health not only during but even before you become pregnant. Eating a healthy diet before you become pregnant will give your body a good store of nutrients for your baby to draw on. This will give your baby the best possible start to life and help you keep fit and well. However if you are already several months pregnant don't worry, it is never too late to start eating a healthy diet and both you and your baby will feel the benefits.

Before you conceive

Planning for Pregnancy

The first eight to ten weeks of pregnancy are vital to baby's development. This is a vulnerable time for the fetus as many women may not yet be aware of their pregnancy.

Ideally you should plan for your pregnancy three to six months before you conceive. Don't worry if you do not conceive immediately - it may take several months and it is normal.

If you are trying for a baby and do not conceive after a year or so, you may wish to see your family medical practitioner or gynecologist to rule out any possible fertility problems.

Continue with your usual method of contraception until you and your partner are ready for pregnancy.

If you have been using a cap or condom, you can stop using these and start trying for a baby at any time.

If you have been using the pill it is best to wait two to three months after stopping the pill, to allow your periods to re-establish a regular pattern.

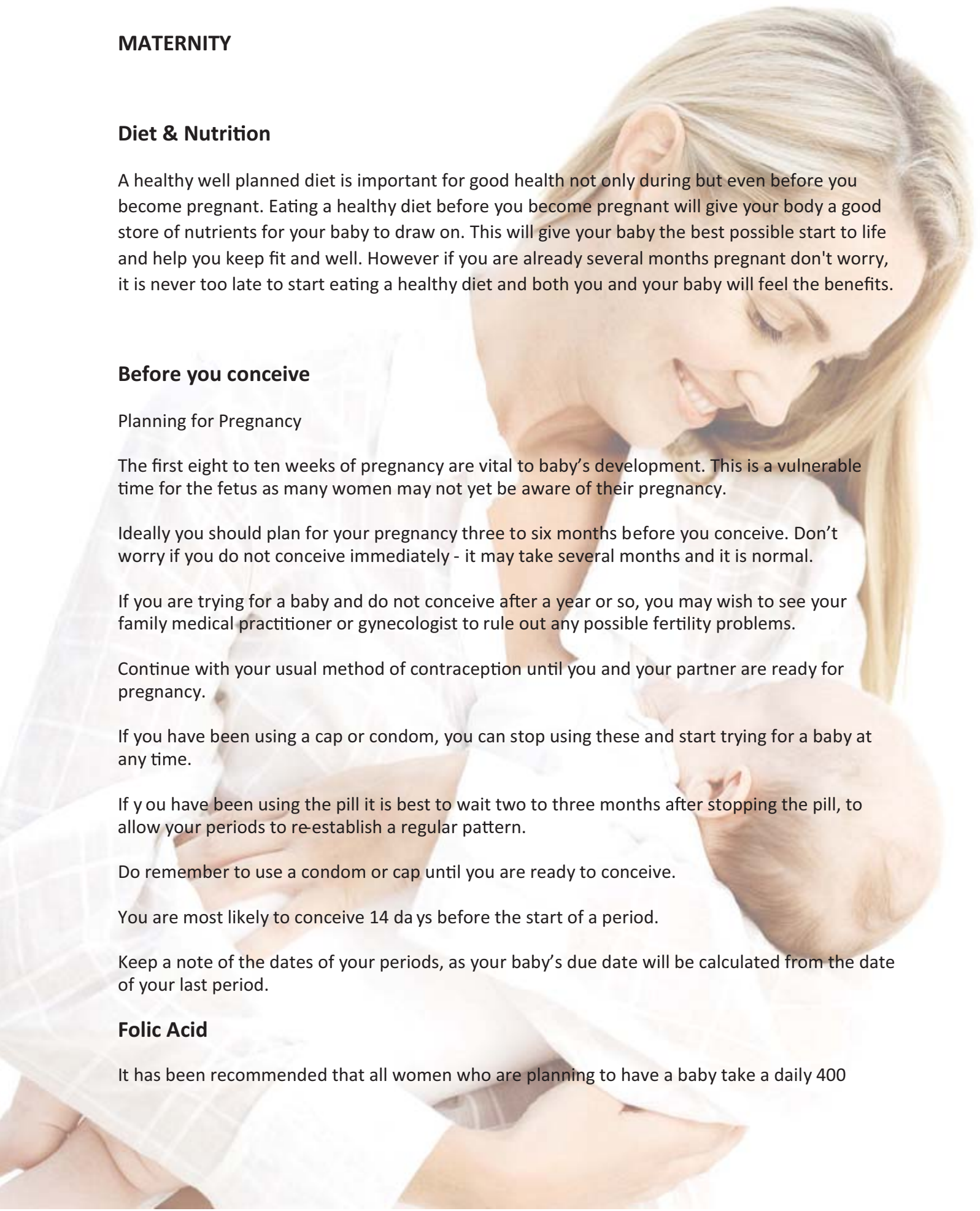
Do remember to use a condom or cap until you are ready to conceive.

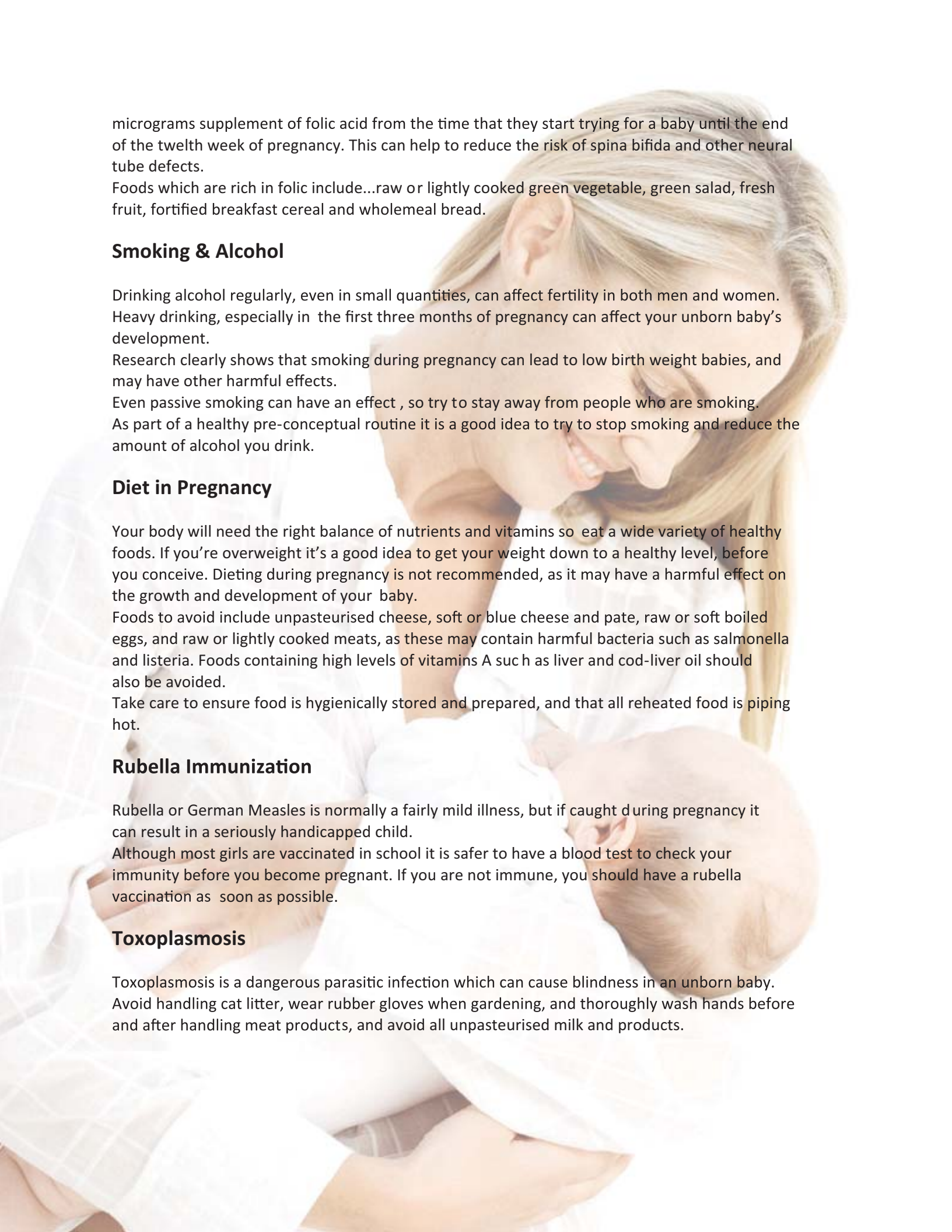
You are most likely to conceive 14 days before the start of a period.

Keep a note of the dates of your periods, as your baby's due date will be calculated from the date of your last period.

Folic Acid

It has been recommended that all women who are planning to have a baby take a daily 400





micrograms supplement of folic acid from the time that they start trying for a baby until the end of the twelfth week of pregnancy. This can help to reduce the risk of spina bifida and other neural tube defects.

Foods which are rich in folic include...raw or lightly cooked green vegetable, green salad, fresh fruit, fortified breakfast cereal and wholemeal bread.

Smoking & Alcohol

Drinking alcohol regularly, even in small quantities, can affect fertility in both men and women. Heavy drinking, especially in the first three months of pregnancy can affect your unborn baby's development.

Research clearly shows that smoking during pregnancy can lead to low birth weight babies, and may have other harmful effects.

Even passive smoking can have an effect, so try to stay away from people who are smoking.

As part of a healthy pre-conceptual routine it is a good idea to try to stop smoking and reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.

Diet in Pregnancy

Your body will need the right balance of nutrients and vitamins so eat a wide variety of healthy foods. If you're overweight it's a good idea to get your weight down to a healthy level, before you conceive. Dieting during pregnancy is not recommended, as it may have a harmful effect on the growth and development of your baby.

Foods to avoid include unpasteurised cheese, soft or blue cheese and pate, raw or soft boiled eggs, and raw or lightly cooked meats, as these may contain harmful bacteria such as salmonella and listeria. Foods containing high levels of vitamins A such as liver and cod-liver oil should also be avoided.

Take care to ensure food is hygienically stored and prepared, and that all reheated food is piping hot.

Rubella Immunization

Rubella or German Measles is normally a fairly mild illness, but if caught during pregnancy it can result in a seriously handicapped child.

Although most girls are vaccinated in school it is safer to have a blood test to check your immunity before you become pregnant. If you are not immune, you should have a rubella vaccination as soon as possible.

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is a dangerous parasitic infection which can cause blindness in an unborn baby.

Avoid handling cat litter, wear rubber gloves when gardening, and thoroughly wash hands before and after handling meat products, and avoid all unpasteurised milk and products.

Breast Feeding

IS BREASTFEEDING BEST FOR MY BABY?

Breastmilk is the best food for babies because:

- It is complete food containing everything needed for the first half -year of life.
- It satisfies both hunger and thirst, extra water is usually not needed, except in hot weather.
- It increases a baby's resistance to infection and disease.
- It lessens the risk of allergy and food intolerance.

Breastfeeding is good for mothers too because:

- It is convenient, cheap and always there when you need it.
- It is always fresh, clean and safe. · It quickly soothes a fussy, unhappy baby.
- It may help your uterus return to normal sooner after childbirth.
- It gives you a chance to sit down during the day and rest as you breastfeed.
- It makes you feel good because you know you are giving your baby the best possible start.

Breastfeeding helps create a close and loving bond between you and your baby and can be a deeply satisfying experience for you both.

HOW SOON AFTER BIRTH CAN I START TO BREASTFEED?

Most babies have a strong need to suck when they are first born, so if you are both well you can start straight away. Many mothers offer the breast while they are still on the delivery table. The first milk in your breasts at this time is called colostrum.

HOW DO I PUT MY BABY TO THE BREAST?


Find a comfortable position either seated or lying. Hold your baby close to you, chest to chest and chin to breast with your nipple opposite baby's mouth. Gently touch baby's lips with your nipple to encourage your baby's mouth to open wide. Make sure that your nipple and as much as possible of your areola (the darker area around your nipple) is in the baby's mouth. When baby is positioned correctly for breastfeeding, it should not hurt you.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BREASTFEED AT FIRST?

Your breasts make milk in response to your baby's sucking - the more milk the baby takes, the more milk you make. You will establish a good supply of milk if you:

- Feed frequently whenever your baby cries or seems hungry. Let baby finish the breast before offering the second breast;
- Feed your baby at night (this also helps prevent your breasts becoming too full and uncomfortable)



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- Make sure your baby has at least 6 -8 feeds in 24 hours (many young babies have more than this - often 10 - 12 feeds)
 - Avoid giving complementary bottles ("comps") which will reduce your baby's need to suck at the breast and so reduce your milk supply.

HOW CAN I HELP MY BABY TO GET THE MILK?

The following hints may help:

- Cuddle your baby close to you before offering the breast.
- If your baby is too sleepy to feed and you are taking any medications, ask your doctor/midwife if they could be affecting your baby.
- Talk to your doctor -/midwife if pain from stitches is making you tense.
- Draw the curtains if you feel you would like privacy in the hospital.
- Breathing slowly and deeply may help you relax.
- Gently massaging your breast and rolling your nipples between your thumb and forefinger before putting baby to the breast may start your milk flowing.

HOW DO I KNOW MY BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH?

If your baby is feeding frequently, has plenty of pale, wet nappies (at least 6 -8 in 24 hours) on breastmilk alone, is gaining weight and seems reasonably alert, active and happy, then relax.

HOW CAN I INCREASE MY MILK SUPPLY?

If you feel your supply is low, feed your baby more often. Take things easy for a few days... just relax and let your baby breastfeed often. The more milk your baby takes from your breasts, the more milk you will make.

DO I HAVE TO EAT OR DRINK PARTICULAR FOODS?

There are no magic foods which will increase the milk supply - a sensible balanced diet is the key. It is a good idea to avoid those foods which upset you, or to which other family members are allergic.

WHAT ABOUT NIGHT FEEDS?

New babies wake at night from hunger and need to be fed. This also helps your milk supply. Some babies sleep through the night quite early- others take much longer. Breastfeeding is the quickest and easiest way to soothe and settle your baby.