

# Breastfeeding Your Premature Infant

The milk produced by the mother of a premature infant is higher in protein and other nutrients than the milk produced by the mother of a term infant. Human milk also contains lipase, an enzyme that allows the baby to digest fat more efficiently. Your breastfed preemie is less likely to develop infections that are common to babies fed breast milk substitutes. He will be protected by the immunities in your milk while his own immature immune system is developing.

Your fresh milk is best for your baby. Donor milk must be pasteurized, which kills the infection-fighting live cells (though it is certainly the best alternative when a mother is unable to provide her own milk).

Research has found that breastfeeding is less stressful than bottle feeding for babies, so let your doctor know you prefer to put the baby to the breast when he is ready, instead of using a bottle. To encourage a reluctant baby, you may want to try a special tube feeding system on your nipple or finger. An LLL Leader or lactation consultant will be able to help you obtain one and learn to use it. It may be a slow process, feeding your preterm, but it will be well worth it in the end.



*Jessica Fibbe*  
Birth & Breastfeeding Services