

How to breastfeed: Getting a good attachment

This is a transcript of the Raising Children Network video available at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/breastfeeding_attachment_video.html. This video on breastfeeding has tips for good attachment to help you get your baby feeding well. The video includes an animated diagram, a mum's point of view and step-by-step instructions. It helps new mums see what good attachment looks and feels like and understand how babies feed.

Narrator: Getting a good attachment is an important step towards getting breastfeeding working for you and your baby. Becoming skilled at it can take time. Having you and your baby calm and relaxed is the first key step towards getting a good attachment to the breast. One thing that can help is to recognise the things your baby does to tell you he's ready for a feed, like turning his head from side to side with his mouth open.

Narrator: To start the feed, hold your baby in close, along your forearm so that her chest is touching yours. Remember to bring your baby to your breast and not your breast to your baby.

Onscreen tip: *Diagram*

Narrator: Bring your baby's nose directly opposite your nipple. As your baby tips her head back, her top lip brushes over your nipple. This encourages her to open her mouth wide. When her mouth is wide open, hug your baby to your breast and she can take your breast into her mouth with her chin leading. When your baby attaches well, she will have a large mouthful of breast in her mouth and your nipple will be positioned far back in her mouth, towards her soft palate. Breastfeeding will more likely feel comfortable and she can get the milk she needs.

Narrator: So here is how it will look to you. Bring your baby's nose directly opposite your nipple. Allow your baby's head to tip back. As it does, her top lip will brush over your nipple. This encourages her to open her mouth wide. Sometimes it can take a few goes to get the timing right. So you can encourage her to open her mouth wide again by brushing your nipple over her top lip.

When her mouth is open wide, quickly hug her onto your breast directing your nipple towards the roof of her mouth. This helps achieve a deep attachment where your nipple is deep inside your baby's mouth towards her soft palate.

When your baby is attached well to your breast, her chin will be touching your breast and her nose is clear or only just touching your breast. Her lips are flanged out, not sucked in. There will be more of your areola showing above your baby's top lip, as compared to her lower lip.

You also know you have good attachment if there is no pain, although it is common for some mums in the early weeks to feel some nipple pain that ceases after the initial attachment.

Narrator: At the start of the breastfeed, your baby sucks will be fast and shallow as she gets the milk flowing, by triggering the reflex that allows the milk to flow. After this, she will do groups of deeper, slower, suck and swallows.

Swallowing can be identified by a soft tick sound and also by a pause in her chin when it drops down to its lowest position when she has a mouthful of milk. The longer the pause in her chin, the bigger the mouthful. Rest periods between sucking are a normal part of breastfeeding too. As the breastfeed continues, the groups of sucks and swallows gradually become shorter and the rest periods longer.

Most of the time a baby will come off on her own accord when she is finished with that breast.

Narrator: If you feel nipple pain beyond the initial attachment, you can try attaching your baby again. To break the attachment, avoid pulling your baby away from your breast. This could cause more pain and damage your nipple. Instead, break the attachment by inserting a clean finger into the corner of your baby's mouth between her gums. Gently but firmly press down on her lower gums and remove her from the breast.

Narrator: Every mother and baby have slightly different ways of attaching to the breast. Doing what works best for you and your baby is important. So long as breastfeeding is comfortable and your baby is getting enough milk, exactly how you position and attach your baby doesn't matter. You can find out more about whether your baby is getting enough milk in our common questions video.
