



Breastfeeding Positions

An important responsibility of new parents is to see that their baby gets nourishment to grow and develop properly. With your decision to breastfeed, you've joined the majority of mothers who have chosen this preferred method of feeding babies. Knowing and using proper positions is key to breastfeeding success.

You can either sit or lie down to breastfeed. Whichever position you choose, get comfortable before you begin. Your baby also needs to be comfortable, to make breastfeeding easier for her.* Shown here are several breastfeeding positions. It is a good idea to use different positions so that the baby doesn't always latch on (attach) and apply pressure on the same area of your areola (the dark skin around the nipple). It will also help assure that all the milk ducts are emptied.

Breastfeeding Positions

The "cradle" hold is a frequently used position. Sit in a comfortable chair with support for your arms and back. Make sure your back is straight so you won't find yourself in a "hunched" position. Lift gently and support your breast with your hand in a cupped C shape, with the thumb on top and fingers below the breast, well behind the areola.

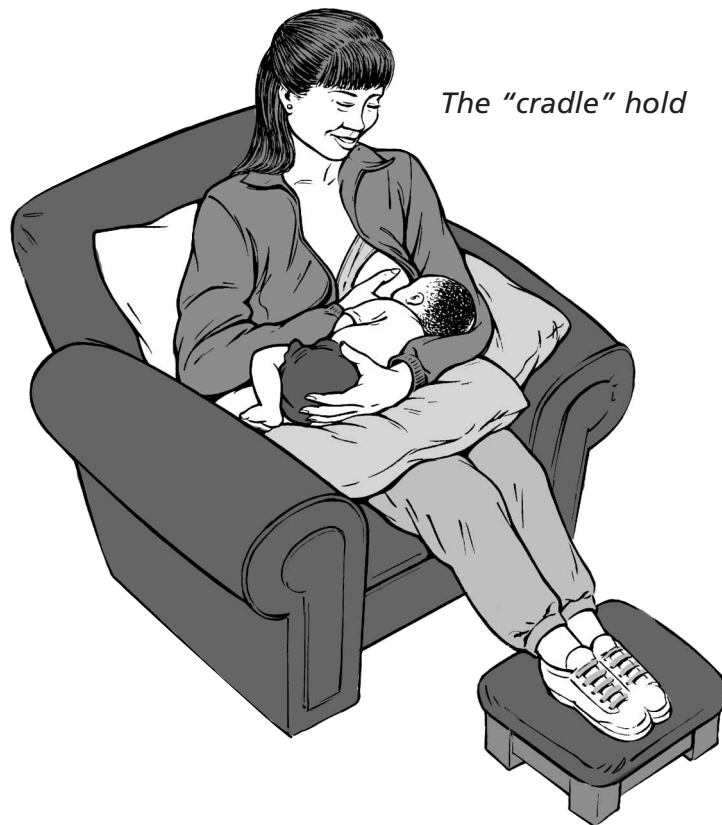
Place your baby across your stomach, with her face and knees close-in facing your body. You will be "tummy to tummy."

The baby's head should be in the bend of your elbow, with her mouth directly in front of your nipple. Make sure you support your arm or it will become tired before the feeding is over. You can use pillows to help with this.

Tuck the baby's lower arm around your waist, out of the way.

Note the position of this baby's body in the cradle hold—a straight line is formed from his ear to his shoulder to his hip.

When your baby opens her mouth wide, pull her onto the breast far enough that the tip of her nose, her cheeks, and her chin are all touching your breast. This is necessary for proper latch-on regardless of the position you may choose.



The "cradle" hold

Another breastfeeding position in which you are sitting is called the "football" or "clutch" hold because your baby is cradled under your arm. This position gives you better control of the baby's head and allows you to see that he is latching on properly. You might try this position if you are concerned about latch-on, if you have a small or premature baby, have large breasts, or have a sore abdomen from a cesarean birth.

Place pillows at your side to support your elbow and the baby's bottom. Place the baby's head in the palm of your hand. Bring him up to the level of your breast. Support the base of his head between your thumb and forefinger. If your baby doesn't seem to like this, put a soft blanket between your hand and his head for padding.

The "football" or "clutch" hold



Lying down can be a comfortable position for breastfeeding, especially at night or when sitting is uncomfortable.

Lie on your side, using one pillow to support your head and another along your back. Your head and neck should be comfortably propped up.

Or you can lie on your side with one arm bent under your head and the other hand supporting your breast. Put a small rolled blanket behind the baby's back. Lay the baby next to you on the bed so that his mouth is opposite your nipple. When he opens his mouth wide, he is ready to latch on.

Lying down to breastfeed



The "cross-cradle" hold is another position in which you will be sitting. It is a good position to use if you are concerned about correct latch-on or if you are feeding a small or premature baby. You have control of the baby's head and can see the latch-on more clearly than when using the traditional "cradle" hold.

Hold the baby across your body in the arm opposite the breast from which she will be feeding. Her position will be the same as in the "cradle" hold, but you will use the other arm to hold her. The baby should be at the level of your breast, with her whole body turned toward you.



The "cross-cradle" hold

Breastfeeding gives your baby a loving foundation for a healthy life. For every day that you breastfeed, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are enriching both your baby's life and your own.

If you have any questions, please contact your health care professional.