

# Feeding Breast Milk to Your Premature Baby

As you wait for the early birth of your baby, please consider making your breast milk available for feeding your baby.

When your baby is born early, he or she may not have the energy to breast or bottle feed. Your baby may need to be fed through a tube for a time until he is able to suck on a nipple. Your breast milk can be given to your baby this way.

## Why is breast milk good for the baby?

Early breast milk gives baby some protection from a serious bowel infection, called necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) that can occur in premature babies. There is no medicine or formula that can give this protection.

Breast milk is easier for your baby to digest than formula. It is high in calories to help your baby grow. Breast milk also has special elements that are good for your baby that are not in formula. For example, your breast milk helps:

- Protect your baby from other infections
- Improve baby's eye function
- Improve baby's brain development

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**Learn more about your health care.**

If you decide to give your baby breast milk, you can pump your breasts every few hours. The milk can be stored and used to feed your baby. When your baby is able to breast feed, you can breast feed your baby and pump less. You can use breast milk to feed your baby as long as you would like. Many moms breast feed for the first year of life or longer.

The nurses and the lactation consultant can teach you how to use a breast pump. If you are not able to buy a pump, they can give you information about other options for getting a pump to use. They will also teach you how to store your milk for your baby's feedings in the hospital or at home.

✦ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**