

Building Your Breastfeeding Relationship

Strategies to Connect with
Your Baby &
Build Breastfeeding Skills



Setting the Stage for Breastfeeding Success

Think About the Environment:

- Is mom sitting in a relaxed position with lots of support?
- Can you adjust the lighting to help baby relax?
- What is the noise level of the room?
- Is there lots of positive touch involved?

Think About the Routine:

- Is baby too tired?
- Is baby showing signs of hunger?
- Are you signaling to baby that it is time to eat?

Think About Baby:

- Is baby in a fully supported position?
- Is baby alert enough to eat?
- Does baby need you to help with pacing or positioning?
- Does baby need more oral motor supports?



Using Massage to Support Oral Motor Development

Try some simple oral massage techniques with your baby.

Keep it fun, talk, & make eye contact with baby.

“Warm up” baby’s mouth and lip muscles with massage:

- Use 1 or 2 fingers on baby’s face (use a washcloth if preferred) with the following gentle strokes:
 - 1) Start at the ears and rub along cheeks in one long stroke and go down through the lips.
 - 2) Use 2 fingers on either side of the nose and rub down through lips (one stroke).
 - 3) Use 2 fingers starting at the bottom of the chin and use one stroke up through lips.
 - 4) Finish with 1st massage stroke again.

Watch this video for instruction on oral massage: <https://youtu.be/eDVMrSx1NH0>



More Oral Motor Massage

Massage the hard palate. Use for babies who gag or to improve latch:

- First work on desensitizing the palate. Begin by massaging Baby’s palate near the gum-line. Work on massaging farther in, but avoid gagging baby.
- Try gentle desensitization of the tongue with deep pressure using a finger. Start at the tip and slowly work back towards middle of tongue.
- Use your finger to massage the hard palate by starting at hard palate’s midline and massaging out to the sides.

Suck strengthening:

- Face the baby forward and place finger pad up against upper palate and allow for sucking on finger.
- If using a pacifier, give GENTLE pulls to pacifier while in baby’s mouth so that baby sucks it back in.

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Torticollis and Breastfeeding

Look for Feeding Difficulties Associated with Infants with Torticollis:

- Breast refusal on one side
- Overproduction on one side
- Weak suck
- Leakage

Torticollis can contribute to *oral motor* difficulties in infants and can also potentially lead to feeding difficulties when transitioning to table foods and solids. A qualified OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST can help.

Positions you can try with babies who have torticollis:

- Torticollis Tummy Twist
Turn the infant's lower body so the abdomen rests against the mom's thighs.
- Spiderman (Hip Straddle)
Sit baby against mom's hip and allow the head to rotate toward center. Mom uses her arm as a guardrail. (see picture →)
- Arm Lie
Rest the infant's head on mother's arm to facilitate breastfeeding while side lying.



* A baby with a torticollis diagnosis should also be receiving PHYSICAL THERAPY through Early Intervention.*

Do you still have QUESTIONS
about the development of
YOUR BABY'S oral motor skills &
breastfeeding abilities?

Contact

TEIS Early Intervention Provider

412-271-8347

Or

Text INFO to 412-543-8398



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