

# Counseling Questions and Topics of Discussion

APRIL 2025

## Prenatal breastfeeding assessments

This guide is to help facilitate discussion during pregnancy and postpartum. Use these example assessment questions to help pregnant participants prepare for their breastfeeding journey and support post-partum participants as they breastfeed.

### First trimester (0-12 weeks) assessment

Question:	Information to collect:
What are your thoughts about breastfeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Breastfeeding intentions, goals.</li> <li>▪ If not interested in breastfeeding, why?</li> </ul>
What have you heard about breastfeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Opportunity to educate about benefits.</li> <li>▪ Past breastfeeding experience.</li> <li>▪ Do they know anyone who has breastfed? What have they heard or observed?</li> </ul>
What concerns or worries do you have about breastfeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Myths or motivations.</li> <li>▪ Potential barriers.</li> <li>▪ Support system.</li> <li>▪ Past experience.</li> </ul>
Have you done anything to prepare for breastfeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Education or classes (either complete or planning to complete).</li> <li>▪ Interest in WIC breastfeeding materials or classes.</li> </ul>

### **Topics of discussion**

- Benefits of breastmilk.
- Past breastfeeding experience.
- Potential barriers.
- Self-efficacy and confidence.
- Support system.
- Address any concerns with breastfeeding or infant feeding.
- Referral to IBCLC/DBE if health or anatomical concerns relating to breastfeeding.
- Provide information for support groups including La Leche League & Baby Café.
- Address anticipatory guidance as appropriate, see third trimester education topics.

### **Handouts and links**

- Thinking about breastfeeding - [Thinking About Breastfeeding?](#)
- Benefits of breastfeeding - [Breastfeeding Benefits | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- How milk is made - [How Breast Milk is Made | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- [Risks of not breastfeeding - Risks of Not Breastfeeding](#)

### **Other tips**

- Refer to prenatal lactation consultation if there are anatomical or health history concerns.
- Provide local support groups & Baby Café information.
- Suggest they enter your name/phone number into their contacts.
- Address anticipatory guidance as appropriate.

## Second trimester (13-27 weeks) assessment

*\*Include assessment from first trimester if this is the first visit.*

Question:	Information to collect:
What are your breastfeeding goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns with breastfeeding that have come up.</li> <li>▪ Commitment to breastfeeding goal.</li> <li>▪ Opportunity to address myths/conceptions about breastfeeding.</li> <li>▪ If not interested or changed mind about breastfeeding, try to find out why.</li> </ul>
What might prevent you from reaching your goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What have they been told (breastfeeding hurt, did not produce enough)?</li> <li>▪ Anticipated barriers.</li> <li>▪ Discussion of return-to-work plans. This can be helpful for women to discuss when they tell their job about the pregnancy.</li> </ul>
Are you familiar with how milk production works?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does my body produce milk? Keep it simple and understandable.</li> </ul>
What is your birth plan? (Examples: Being with baby right after birth, skin to skin, avoiding pacifiers and artificial nipples, avoiding formula unless there is a medical need, rooming in)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What discussions have been had with their healthcare provider about breastfeeding and expectations after birth?</li> </ul>

### Topics of discussion

- Exclusive breastfeeding.
- Understanding normal breastfeeding.
- Physiological changes of the breasts during pregnancy.
- How the breast makes milk.
- Baby behavior (sleep, signs of hunger).
- Delaying bottles and pacifiers.

- How dads and partners can help.
- Getting a pump through insurance.
- Breastfeeding resources (hospital, clinic, and pediatrician lactation support).
- Address anticipatory guidance as appropriate.

**Handouts and links**

- Breastfeeding basics - [Breastfeeding for Mom](#)
- Baby behavior - [Baby Behavior: Light sleep](#)
- Hunger signs - [Signs your baby is hungry](#)
- How to latch - [Steps and Signs of a Good Latch | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- Breastfeeding positions - [5 Breastfeeding Holds to Try | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)

**Other tips**

- Refer to prenatal lactation consultation if there are anatomical or health history concerns.
- Provide local support groups & Baby Café information.
- Suggest they enter your name and phone number into their contacts.
- Address anticipatory guidance as appropriate.

**Third trimester (28+ weeks) assessment**

*\*Include assessments from first and second trimesters if this is the first visit.*

Question:	Information to collect:
What questions do you have about breastfeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Barriers.</li> <li>▪ Concerns.</li> <li>▪ Resources the participant has and needs.</li> <li>▪ Readiness for breastfeeding.</li> </ul>

**Topics of discussion**

First week of breastfeeding anticipatory guidance:

- Frequency of breastfeeding.
- Skin-to-skin contact.
- Early feeding within first hour.
- Avoiding pacifiers and bottles.
- Barriers and concerns.
- Cluster feedings.

## COUNSELING QUESTIONS AND TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- Reasons to express milk and manual expression.
- First milk and transitional milk (comes in faster with frequent nursing).
- Supplementation usually not necessary.
- When to seek help.
- Meeting with lactation consultant and establishing a feeding plan before hospital discharge.
- Breastfeeding resources (hospital lactation support, clinic lactations specialist, WIC, Family home visiting).
- Getting a pump through insurance.

### Handouts and links

- Early feeding, within first hour - [Breastfeeding in the First Hour | Newborn Nursery | Stanford Medicine](#)
- Hand Expression - [Hand Expressing Milk | Newborn Nursery | Stanford Medicine](#)
- What is a normal number of feedings - [How Much Milk Your Baby Needs | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- Cluster feeding and growth spurts - [Cluster Feeding and Growth Spurts | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- Breastmilk storage - [Breast Milk Storage and Preparation | Breastfeeding | CDC](#)
- Survival guide for the first two weeks - [Survival Guide for the First Two Weeks](#)

### Additional information

In the early days, mothers might need to be reminded why the small volume of colostrum is important for baby. Teaching tool: belly balls.

They might also need to be reminded that babies need to eat very often - eight or more times every 24 hours.

Babies also want to be close to the mother and to the breast, which reminds the baby of “home” inside the uterus.

Beyond the early days, mothers might need continued reminders that exclusive breastfeeding will maintain milk production and gives the baby important health benefits that will last a lifetime.

## Post-partum breastfeeding assessment

### Infant dyad appointment assessment

Question:	Information to collect:
<p>How is breastfeeding going? How are you feeling about breastfeeding?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Breastfeeding amount.</li> <li>▪ Breastfeeding challenges.</li> <li>▪ Breastfeeding successes.</li> <li>▪ Breastfeeding questions.</li> <li>▪ Even if breastfeeding is going well, still assess for more information as there may be something going on she is unaware of.</li> </ul>
<p>What are your breastfeeding goals?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confidence.</li> <li>▪ “As long as possible” not necessarily a bad goal.</li> <li>▪ Satisfaction with current ratio of breast milk and formula use.</li> <li>▪ Is discussion of combined feeding necessary? (Some moms think breastfeeding must be all or nothing.)</li> </ul>
<p>Will you be returning to work or having times you need to be away from baby?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plans when separated from baby due to work, school, custody issues, etc.</li> <li>▪ Intentions for feeding during time away.</li> <li>▪ Does plan need to be made for pumping?</li> <li>▪ Pump referral and use.</li> <li>▪ Milk storage questions.</li> </ul>
<p>Any medical or health problems with mom or baby that could impact how well breastfeeding is going?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Birth history: hemorrhaging, separation from baby, supplementing in the hospital, artificial nipple use.</li> <li>▪ Anatomical features of baby: tongue tied, cleft, etc.</li> <li>▪ Health care provider referral or recommendations from provider.</li> </ul>

COUNSELING QUESTIONS AND TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

<p>How often are you breastfeeding?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Day and night frequency.</li> <li>▪ Feeding on a schedule with timed feeds or on demand?</li> <li>▪ One or both breasts offered at a feeding.</li> <li>▪ What concerns you most about feedings?</li> <li>▪ Tell me about baby’s feeding patterns (how often baby eats, how long, and how baby behaves during and after feedings).</li> <li>▪ How often is your baby going to the breast?</li> <li>▪ How often are you offering your breast to your baby?</li> <li>▪ How long does you baby feed at your breast?</li> <li>▪ How does the feeding end?</li> </ul>
<p>Are you pumping or expressing breast milk?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How often?</li> <li>▪ What does she do with the breast milk?</li> <li>▪ When is it used?</li> <li>▪ How is it given?</li> <li>▪ How is it stored?</li> </ul>
<p>Are you supplementing with anything other than breastmilk?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why did they start supplementing?</li> <li>▪ When did supplementation start?</li> <li>▪ How much and how often?</li> <li>▪ Any growth concerns?</li> <li>▪ How are they supplementing (bottle, dropper, spoon, supplemental nursing system (SNS).</li> <li>▪ Plans for discontinuing supplementation.</li> </ul>
<p>What, if any, medications or supplements is mom taking?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Any herbs, food, teas to help with milk supply?</li> <li>▪ Is medical provider aware of intake?</li> <li>▪ Birth control and breastfeeding.</li> </ul>

COUNSELING QUESTIONS AND TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

<p>What signs does baby give of hunger or fullness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is mom familiar with cues/satiety?</li> <li>▪ Do they ever delay a feeding when baby is hungry?</li> <li>▪ Try to feed when baby is full?</li> </ul>
<p>Any pain or discomfort?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Where? Could be nipple pain, breast pain, abdominal pain.</li> <li>▪ When is she feeling the pain? (the beginning of a feed, the whole feeding, after feedings, between feedings, when pumping?)</li> <li>▪ What is she doing to relieve the pain?</li> <li>▪ How old is baby? (Nipple pain may occur in early breastfeeding - still explore further)</li> </ul>
<p>How do you feel about your baby's latch? What does your baby do at the breast?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is baby latching correctly on mom's breast?</li> <li>▪ Are they using any equipment to help baby latch (nipple shield)?</li> <li>▪ Is swallowing heard at the breast?</li> <li>▪ Describe any challenges you are having with positioning or latch.</li> <li>▪ Which breastfeeding positions have you tried?</li> <li>▪ Which position make you and your baby more comfortable?</li> </ul>
<p>If you have questions or concerns that come up with breastfeeding, where would you go for information and resources?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowledge of available resources.</li> <li>▪ Do they have a support system in place? Who is part of their support system?</li> </ul>

**Handouts and links**

- Anticipatory Guidance - [Survival-Guide-for-the-First-Two-Weeks-PDF](#)
- Baby behaviors - [WIC Baby Behavior Brochure](#)
- Common breastfeeding problems - [Common Breastfeeding Challenges | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)

## COUNSELING QUESTIONS AND TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- Maintaining milk supply if pumping - [Making Milk Expression Work for You | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- How body makes milk - [How Breast Milk is Made | WIC Breastfeeding Support](#)
- Low milk production - [IABLE Low Milk Production](#)
- Your agency's local resources

## Complete list of hyperlinks

[Thinking About Breastfeeding?](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/bfthinking.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/bfthinking.pdf>)

[Breastfeeding Benefits | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/breastfeeding-benefits)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/breastfeeding-benefits>)

[How Breast Milk is Made | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-breast-milk-made)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-breast-milk-made>)

[Risks of not breastfeeding - Risks of Not Breastfeeding](https://www.lactationtraining.com/resources/handouts-parents?task=document.viewdoc&id=164)

(<https://www.lactationtraining.com/resources/handouts-parents?task=document.viewdoc&id=164>)

[Breastfeeding for Mom](https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25610/Breastfeeding-Basics-for-Moms-PDF)

(<https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25610/Breastfeeding-Basics-for-Moms-PDF>)

[Baby Behavior: Light sleep](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ILUJV0QLAiY&list=PLnv1INVkxmtYaMmoW55oBHnbgmps7Ai1)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ILUJV0QLAiY&list=PLnv1INVkxmtYaMmoW55oBHnbgmps7Ai1>)

[Signs your baby is hungry](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/babys-hunger-cues) (<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/babys-hunger-cues>)

[Steps and Signs of a Good Latch | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/steps-and-signs-good-latch)

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[5 Breastfeeding Holds to Try | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/5-breastfeeding-holds-try)

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[Breastfeeding in the First Hour | Newborn Nursery | Stanford Medicine](https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-in-the-first-hour.html)

(<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-in-the-first-hour.html>)

[Hand Expressing Milk | Newborn Nursery | Stanford Medicine](https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/hand-expressing-milk.html)

(<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/hand-expressing-milk.html>)

[How Much Milk Your Baby Needs | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-much-milk-your-baby-needs)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-much-milk-your-baby-needs>)

[Cluster Feeding and Growth Spurts | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/cluster-feeding-and-growth-surts)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/cluster-feeding-and-growth-surts>)

[Breast Milk Storage and Preparation | Breastfeeding | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breast-milk-preparation-and-storage/handling-breastmilk.html)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breast-milk-preparation-and-storage/handling-breastmilk.html>)

[Survival Guide for the First Two Weeks](https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25613/Survival-Guide-for-the-First-Two-Weeks-PDF)

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(<https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25613/Survival-Guide-for-the-First-Two-Weeks-PDF>)

[WIC Baby Behavior Brochure](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/babybehaviors/english.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/babybehaviors/english.pdf>)

[Common Breastfeeding Challenges | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/common-breastfeeding-challenges)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/common-breastfeeding-challenges>)

[Making Milk Expression Work for You | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/making-milk-expression-work-you)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/making-milk-expression-work-you>)

[How Breast Milk is Made | WIC Breastfeeding Support](https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-breast-milk-made)

(<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/how-breast-milk-made>)

[IABLE Low Milk Production](https://thepixelfarm.com/iable/membercontent/BFHandouts/IABLE_BF-Ed_LowMilkProd.pdf)

([https://thepixelfarm.com/iable/membercontent/BFHandouts/IABLE\\_BF-Ed\\_LowMilkProd.pdf](https://thepixelfarm.com/iable/membercontent/BFHandouts/IABLE_BF-Ed_LowMilkProd.pdf))

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