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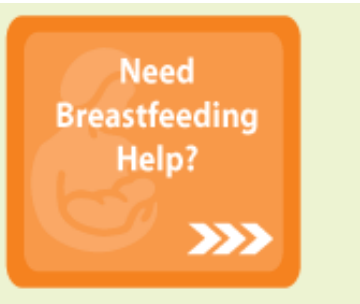
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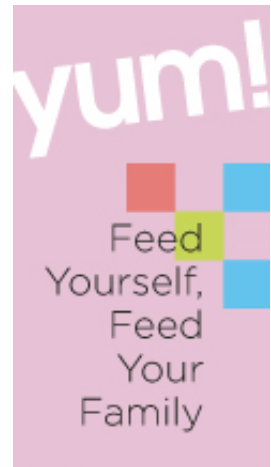
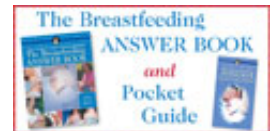
Is it possible to breastfeed my baby who was born with Down Syndrome?

How wonderful that you want to give your baby the precious gift of your milk! Babies with Down Syndrome experience special benefits from breastfeeding beyond the many advantages to typical newborns.

- Breast milk provides extra protection against infections and bowel problems, which are more common in babies with Down Syndrome.
- Breastfeeding improves mouth and tongue coordination, giving a child with Down Syndrome a real developmental advantage.
- The act of breastfeeding provides additional stimulation for your baby.
- Breastfeeding promotes closeness between mother and baby, and enhances mothering skills.
- Extra patience and reasonable expectations are critical when breastfeeding a baby with Down Syndrome. Low muscle tone and a weak suck can impede the baby's ability to breastfeed.

Here are a few tips that may help you breastfeed your baby.

- Because babies with Down syndrome are often sleepy and placid, you may need to interest your baby through frequent breastfeedings throughout the day, wake him fully before breastfeeding, or provide extra touch and stimulation to keep him alert.



- Pay extra attention to positioning your baby at your breast. Try to keep your baby's body elevated near your breasts with his ear, shoulder and hip in a straight line and use extra pillows for support. See LLLI FAQ "[How Do I Position My Baby to Breastfeed?](#)" for more information.
- If gulping and choking are a problem, try positioning your baby so that his neck and throat are slightly higher than your nipple.
- If poor muscle tone makes it difficult for your baby to latch on well, try supporting your baby's chin and jaw while nursing using the "Dancer Hold." (The name of this position was coined by Sarah Coulter Danner, RN, CPNP, CNM, IBCLC and Ed Cerutti, MD. "Dancer" comes from the first letters of their last names (Dan + Cer).) Hold your baby with the arm opposite the breast you'll be offering. Using the hand on the same side as the breast you are offering, cup your breast with your thumb on one side of the breast, palm beneath, index finger pointing outward, and the other three fingers on the other side of the breast. Use your index finger to support your baby's lower jaw while nursing. As your baby's muscle tone improves through breastfeeding and maturity, he will become able to support himself and breastfeed more effectively.

This [FAQ](#) gives general information for mothers of babies born with any disability.

Here is a link to a story from NEW BEGINNINGS, La Leche League's magazine for mothers, written by a mother of a baby with Down Syndrome. It is called "[Nobody Smiles Like I Do.](#)"

Resources for Additional Information

These publications may be available from your La Leche League Leader or from [the LLLI Online Store](#).

Breastfeeding a Baby with Down Syndrome.

Provides education and support for the mother who is breastfeeding a baby with Down Syndrome.

Defining Your Own Success: Breastfeeding after Breast Reduction Surgery, by Diana West:

This thoroughly researched book has useful information far beyond what its title suggests. It contains extensive information about

supplementation as well as increasing milk supply. Some mothers of babies with Down Syndrome will find this very useful.

La Leche League's classic book, THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING, has lots of good information on breastfeeding your baby. This book is available from [the LLLI Online Store](#). You may also find it in bookstores or libraries in your area. It contains all the latest research-based information available about breastfeeding.

Many mothers find it helpful to call a local La Leche League Leader or attend a La Leche League meeting. The support and information of other breastfeeding mothers may make a big difference for you. Check out the section of our Web site entitled "[Finding a Local LLL Group](#)."

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