

Normal Breast Changes in Pregnancy

- The breasts feel tender and fuller because pregnancy hormones are, making parts of the breasts grow.
- The areola (the dark skin around the nipple) is darkening and getting larger so it will be easier for the baby to find the place to eat when he is first born.
- Bumps on the areola make a fluid that cleans and lubricates the nipple and areola. This fluid smells like amniotic fluid (the fluid that surrounds the baby in-utero) so the smell of the breasts will be familiar and attractive to the baby. Newborns have a strong sense of smell.
- The blood vessels in the breasts are easier to see through the skin. The skin stretches as the breasts increase in fullness. The breasts need a good blood supply because nutrients pass from the blood stream into the milk.
- Breastmilk may start leaking from the breasts during pregnancy. Even if their breasts do not leak, all moms produce colostrum. Colostrum is the first milk. It is thick and yellow and full of antibodies.
- By the time a mother is about four months pregnant, her breasts are ready to make milk in case the baby is born early.

Reasons for Possible Concern during Pregnancy

Refer the mother to a lactation specialist or her health care provider for a breast and nipple assessment if:

- The mother has a breast injury, or a history of breast surgery, such as breast reduction

How the Baby is Preparing for Breastfeeding

Before they are born, babies begin learning important skills that will help them breastfeed. Teaching mothers about these skills can increase their confidence in the baby's ability to nurse at birth.

- Babies swallow amniotic fluid in the uterus.
- Babies spend a lot of time with their hands close to their mouth before birth. Babies are often seen sucking on their thumb, fingers or hands during an ultrasound exam.
- By the time baby is due to be born, the baby knows how to root for the breast. The baby will turn his head if touched on the cheek and open its mouth if the bottom lip is tickled.
- Late in pregnancy the baby has learned to coordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing so it can do all three when breastfeeding after birth. Babies practice shallow breathing before birth, using amniotic fluid.



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH SERVICES

Western Region WIC Breastfeeding Coordinators