

What is Suck Training?

Your baby's tongue plays an important role in breastfeeding. It needs to lie on the bottom of the mouth with the tip over the lower gum. As your baby latches to your breast, his/her tongue helps draw your nipple in and curves gently around to help hold it in place while nursing.

This is an exercise you can do to help your baby if you have been told the tongue is not in the correct position. DO this exercise before breastfeeding. Suck training is no longer needed when your baby can suck continuously and correctly for 10 minutes without changing position.

- Wash your hands.
- Be sure your fingernails are smooth and short.
- Stroke the middle of your baby's lower lip with your index finger to encourage him/her to open his/her mouth widely.
- When your baby opens his/her mouth, place your finger, nail side down, into the front of your baby's mouth.
- Your baby will suck your finger into his/her mouth.
- If your baby's tongue does not curl around your finger, stroke the roof of your baby's mouth (palate) then gently press down on the back of your baby's tongue while stroking the tongue forward. This will pull your finger out of your baby's mouth a little bit.
- Allow him/her to suck it back in.
- Repeat this exercise 3 times or until you feel the tongue come forward over the gum.

"Walking Back" on the tongue:

- Touch the baby's cheek with a finger, moving toward his/her lips. Then brush his/her lips a few times with a clean index finger (the fingernail should be trimmed) to encourage him/her to open his/her mouth.
- Massage the outside of the baby's gums with the index finger, beginning each stroke at the middle of the baby's upper or lower gum and moving toward either side.
- When the baby opens his/her mouth, use the tip of the index finger to press firmly on the tip of the baby's tongue and count slowly to three before releasing the pressure.
- Release the pressure, keeping the finger in the baby's mouth and move back a little farther on the tongue, pressing again to a count of three.
- Move back on the tongue one or two more times.
- Try to avoid gagging the baby. If the baby gags, notice how far back your finger was in the baby's mouth. Avoid that far back the next time.
- Repeat the entire "tongue walk" three or four times before each nursing.

Pushing the tongue down and out:

- Put a clean nail-side down index finger (with trimmed fingernail) into the baby's mouth with fingernail side pressing gently on the baby's tongue.
- Leave the finger in that position for about thirty seconds while the baby sucks on it.
- Turn the finger over slowly so that the finger pad is on the baby's tongue and push down on his/her tongue while gradually pulling the finger out of the mouth.
- Repeat this exercise several times before latching the baby onto the breast.