

***Human breast milk is custom made, contains all the nutrition that a human baby needs.***

## Lactation Process

The process of lactation happens in three stages, each triggered by different events or actions that occur over time. Triggered by hormones in the first trimester, breast growth is typically complete by around 20 weeks of pregnancy. These same hormones also ***trigger the first stage of milk production and the first milk that your body produces called colostrum.***

Known as liquid gold, **colostrum is thick and yellow in color.** It is high in *protein, vitamins, minerals* and *living antibodies* that pass directly to your baby and provide immunity, which will protect them from bacteria and viruses that they can be exposed to. Babies will normally take about one teaspoon per feeding in those first few days, but frequent feedings and that is all they need.

## Mature Milk

The next stage of milk production occurs after the baby's birth, when ***your colostrum transitions into mature milk.*** This is commonly referred to as your milk coming in, and typically occurs around three to five days after birth. For some, this is very noticeable as the breast may increase dramatically in size. But, for others, it may be more subtle. Transitional milk will finally turn into mature milk which is almost 90% water. In order to keep your baby well hydrated nutritionally, the other 10% is a perfect combination of carbohydrates, protein and fats necessary for energy and growth.

The amount of breast milk that you make is basically determined by how much you express from the baby nursing or from pumping. ***Your removal of milk tells your body how much you need and how much more to make.*** This system is referred to as supply and demand.

## After Birth Bonding

***Your baby will go through many different stages during the first hour of life and they should be doing that right on you with as little interference as possible.*** Research has shown that what happens between you and your baby during that first hour after birth can maximize the bonding experience as well as set up a successful breastfeeding relationship right from the beginning. They're calm and alert, they breathe more naturally. Oxygen saturation is increased and delivered to their brain and other organs. Their body temperature stabilizes and is maintained. Their blood sugar stabilizes and remains normal. They're colonized with all your good bacteria versus the ones from the hospital and the nurses. This will protect them from infection and help to build what we call their microbiome, the basis for good health throughout the rest of their lives.

## Importance of Skin to Skin

Skin to skin contact also supports immediate and long term breastfeeding. Research shows that babies who are put skin to skin with their mothers after birth ***are more likely to exclusively breastfeed while in the hospital, exclusively breastfeed after they go home, and breastfeed for longer durations.***

### References and Footnotes:

Information compiled from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, Washington, DC found at: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/> and La Leche League International, Chicago, IL, found at: <http://www.llli.org/>, accessed 8-20-2018.