

Suck Training

Your baby's tongue plays an important role in breast feeding. The baby's tongue 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 the nipple and areola (the pigmented skin around the nipple). Suck training techniques may be helpful in teaching your baby how to position his/her tongue while feeding

Suck Training

- 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 to open his mouth widely.
- When your baby opens his mouth, place your finger, with nail side down, into the front of your baby's mouth.
- Your baby will suck your finger into his mouth.
- If your baby's tongue doesn't cup around your finger, stroke the palate (roof of your baby's mouth), 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 your baby to suck your finger back into his mouth.
- 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 towards her lips. Then brush his lips a few times with a clean index finger to encourage her to open 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 her mouth, use the tip of the index finger to press firmly on the top of 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 and avoid putting it in 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 upturned index finger (with a trimmed fingernail) into the baby’s mouth with the 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 tongue while gradually pulling the finger out of his mouth.
- Repeat this exercise several times before latching the baby onto the breast.

For additional help with suck training, contact a speech and language or occupational therapist for additional help with breastfeeding sucking problems.



For help, call:

**University MacDonald
Lactation Center**

**East: 216-595-5354
West: 440-250-2035**

References:

Riordan, Jan & Wambach, Karen
“Breastfeeding and Human Lactation,”
4th edition, Jones & Bartlett, 2010