A Day in the Life:
Lactation Nurse

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Babies are born every day and they don’t come with instructions. That is the job of Ann Mcgonegle, a registered nurse specializing in new born care and lactation. Nurse McGonegle works at the Mercy Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, one of the largest birthing hospitals in the state. Her primary duties revolve around assisting new mothers with breast feeding their new born babies. Her job is very hands on and personal.

With the raise of breast feeding in the past ten years, Nurse McGonegle has seen her services needed more and more every day. New mothers are tried, excited, and stressed out after giving birth and need someone to help them with how to care for and feed their new baby. Nurse McGonegle will go from room to room checking in on moms and babies and give them instruction, advice, and support for breast feeding. She will help with problems, medical issues, and frustrations of new mothers. She can see as many as 40 new moms in a given day.

She starts her day at 7:00 in the morning and works a ten hours shift. Every day is different with moms and babies coming onto the floor and being discharged and going home. She tries to see every new mom that comes onto the floor at least once before they go home. If they are having problems they can return to the hospital and she will see them in a small office she has on the floor. She also takes calls from moms that have gone home and continues to help them with breast feeding issues. Part of her job is to also help the moms and babies in the intensive care nursery. This is the hard part of the job since the babies are so sick and some of them don’t survive. Her job can have great joy and at the same time great sorrow when a baby she has worked with dies. The biggest challenges she faces is not enough time to do everything she would like to do with new moms and the lack of education among medical professional about the benefits of breast feeding. Sometimes she has to really advocate for moms that want to breastfeed with doctors and other nurses.