

Are You Wondering How You Can Help Your Partner Breastfeed?



Breastfeeding Benefits

For baby

- Breastmilk meets all of the baby's nutritional needs for the first 6 months, with the perfect balance of nutrients for a growing baby
- Breastmilk is easily digested, so less constipation, gas, diarrhea.
- Breastmilk passes antibodies to baby which means fewer colds, ear infections and tummy bugs.
- Breastfeeding reduces child's risk of asthma, allergies, diabetes, obesity, SIDS, and some cancers.

For the breastfeeding parent

- Helps her recover from the birth
- Releases prolactin which relaxes her and reduces stress
- Reduces lifetime risk of ovarian and breast cancer, osteoporosis, and rheumatoid arthritis

For the family

- Saves time—no need to wash bottles or go buy formula
- Saves money—formula costs about \$1500 a year. Healthier moms and babies means lower health care costs
- A healthier baby means you don't have to miss as much work or school to care for a sick baby

How Partners Can Support Breastfeeding

Knowledge: Learn about breastfeeding and know how to help

Attend a breastfeeding class with her, or read about breastfeeding. Know how to help with positioning. Be able to recognize a good latch. Learn how to prevent, recognize and treat common challenges. Know when and how to contact a lactation consultant for advice. At classes and appointments, ask questions and take notes.

Positive Attitude: Let her know that you value breastfeeding

If she thinks you want her to breastfeed, she's more likely to start and likely to nurse longer than if she thinks you don't care whether she breastfeeds or if she thinks you don't approve. If you have concerns, share them, then do research to learn how to address those issues.

Input: Be involved in decision-making about feeding issues

Often the parent who will breastfeed makes the final decision, but that doesn't mean she wants to make it in isolation. If you step back from decision-making, she may think you don't care. Help her to research and strategize. Decide together what's best. Then support the decision. Stay involved in later decisions like when to introduce solid food.

Practical Support: Help out with everything else!

Take care of the baby in *every way other than feeding*: burp, diaper, bathe, calm, cuddle, bring him to her for feeding. Be responsible for baby's things: pack the diaper bag, do laundry, wash the pump. Take care of the breastfeeding parent: feeding her helps feed the baby. Create a "nest" with everything she needs when nursing, and be sure it's stocked when you're not there. Take care of the house: shop, cook, clean. Take care of responsibilities like paying bills or making plans.

Emotional Support: Let her know you care about her

Be present: hang out with her when she's nursing, call or text when you can't be together. Appreciate her: let her know she's doing a good job and you value what she's doing. Encourage her: help her through the hard days, validate her feelings, and understand that she's going through big changes in her self-identity. Affection: do little things that let her know that you care about her—gifts, love notes, massages, etc.

Note: Caring for a newborn can be emotionally draining for you too. Get the support you need so you have enough energy to support her.

Anticipate Needs: Don't wait till you're asked. Just do it!

What You Need to Know About Breastfeeding

When to Feed, How Long to Feed

Whenever your baby shows hunger cues (rooting, tongue thrusts, sucking), bring him to the nursing parent. Your baby will show cues 10–15 minutes before starting to cry. To learn about cues, watch: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ve7yXXRaYT8

Newborns need to nurse at *least* 8-12 times a day, or *about* every 1-3 hours round the clock. More often is OK.

She should feed at first breast till the baby shows full cues (stops suckling, falls asleep). Then you burp baby if needed. Then she offers 2nd breast. At next feed, start on the other side.

Feeding time ranges: 10-50 minutes. Expect 20-40.

AAP and WHO recommend feeding baby only breastmilk for 6 months, start solids but continue breastfeeding for 1-2 years or longer. She'll need your support to do this!

Signs Baby is Getting Plenty of Breastmilk

Sucking: Baby feeds at least 8 – 12 times a day

Swallowing: You can hear a swallow after most sucks

Softer: Her breast is softer after the feed

Satisfaction: Baby seems to be satisfied after feedings

Soaking: After her mature milk comes in, you should see 6+ wet diapers a day

Stools: After mature milk comes in, at *least* 3 poopy diapers in each 24 hour period for the first month

Scales: Baby gains average of 1 ounce or more per day

To increase milk supply: feed more frequently, use breast compression, and get baby lots of skin-to-skin contact with the breastfeeding parent.

Getting ready to nurse

Make sure she has everything she'll need: water, a snack, pillows she uses, and something to entertain her. Hold baby while she gets settled.

Make sure she's comfortable. Leaning back can help the baby latch on.

Help her get baby into a good position. Signs of a good position: baby is at the same height as the breast, baby's chest and body are tucked snugly up against her, baby's ears, shoulders and hips are in a straight line. The baby's nose is at the nipple and chin at the breast. After baby is latched on, you can add pillows to support baby's weight.

Check for signs of a deep latch:

Baby's chin indents the breast; nose is near or lightly touching breast.

Baby's mouth is open wide, with most of the areola in his mouth.

You hear swallowing. You don't hear clicking or smacking.



Give baby an opportunity to burp

Get baby into a position that puts a little pressure on his belly. Rub or pat his back for a few minutes to bring up a burp. If he doesn't burp, it's OK. Breastfed babies often don't need to. If he spits up a little milk, that's OK too. It's normal.



How to support breastfeeding through the first year

Remember that the first month is the hardest. Breastfeeding is a learned skill, so she'll need extra support during that time.

Learn to prevent, recognize and treat challenges such as: sore nipples, engorgement, clogged ducts, and mastitis. If you think she needs expert advice, you can attend La Leche League meetings (www.llli.org) or contact a lactation consultant. (Search for one at www.ilca.org)

Don't be too quick to give formula if problems arise. There are benefits to exclusive breastfeeding (delaying that first bottle of formula) and giving formula means baby nurses less and milk supply decreases.

She can start pumping and you can start offering bottles of breastmilk once breastfeeding is well established. Usually around one month.

To learn more about breastfeeding, read [Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn](#) or [Simple Guide to Having a Baby](#) by Simkin, et al.

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