

Breastfeeding and Fathers- How fathers make the difference

Benefits of breastfeeding- why should your baby have the chance to breastfeed?

- Breastfeeding builds baby's immune system: breastfed babies have less ear infections, and less respiratory (coughing & wheezing) and gastrointestinal (vomiting & diarrhea) illnesses. They stay healthier and need fewer trips to the doctor and hospital!
- Breastfeeding lowers risk of obesity - breastfeeding babies seem to learn when they are full.
- Breastfeeding makes it less likely your baby will get asthma, especially if it runs in your family.
- Breastfeeding is great for mom also- lowers her risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes AND lowers her risk of breast cancer.
- Breastfeeding increases a bonding hormone, oxytocin, that brings mom, baby and dad closer.

What else is good about breastfeeding?

- It saves a lot of money.
- It saves a lot of time.
- Breastmilk is convenient and always ready when the baby is hungry.

Why is the father important for breastfeeding?

- His help makes the difference - breastfeeding can be hard in the first weeks.
- Studies show that having a partner who knows about breastfeeding, who gives encouragement, and who is positive about breastfeeding predicts mom's choice to breastfeed.
- Studies show that the support of the father improves breastfeeding success for the mother.

So what can the father do to help with breastfeeding?

- Your advocacy is powerful- everything you say matters: "I want you to breastfeed our baby," "I am proud my baby is breastfed," "I won't tolerate negative talk about breastfeeding."
- Let mom sleep when baby sleeps- answer the phone and door, help with cleaning and getting food ready and play with the other kids, keep well meaning relatives in hand.
- Make breastfeeding easy for her- keep her water bottle full, bring the baby to her, help position and latch the baby onto her beautiful breasts, burp and switch the baby to the other side, deal with the breastpump.
- Emotional support is key- give her alone time with you & talk about the outside world.

How can a father bond with a baby who is breastfeeding?

- Skin to skin holding is precious- hold the baby (diaper only) to your naked chest (under your shirt to keep warm) and match heart beats.
- Carry the baby in a soft infant carrier around home, and make bath and changing time your time with baby.
- Spend time watching the baby to learn his or her cues and special habits and personality.
- Sing and talk to the baby, hold and rock the baby- your deep voice can soothe and comfort.

What about the stuff that's harder to talk about?

- Timing for sex is what the obstetrician says- wait till 6 weeks and she says she is ready.
- The orgasm hormone is the same one that makes milk come out of the breasts- breastmilk may spray or leak during sex and that is normal- she can nurse before laying down together to get a little more time and a little less leakage.
- Breastfeeding is sensual - that does not mean the baby is having a sexual experience!
- Breastfeeding doesn't do anything to breasts that pregnancy has not already done...
- Breastfeeding in public is easy to do privately- turn around to latch and then use a cloth or blouse over the baby.