

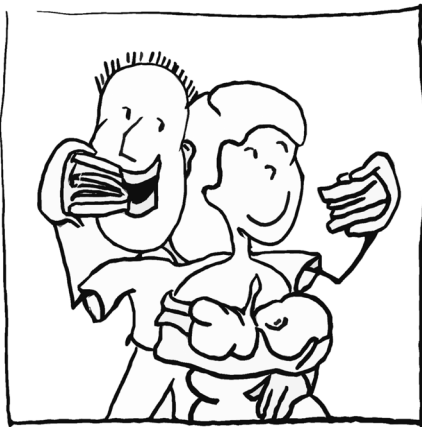
# How Fathers Help Breastfeeding Happen

## What does breastfeeding have to do with fathers?

Fathers-to-be may feel as if they are on the sidelines as far as breastfeeding is concerned. However, once the baby arrives, many men find themselves on the front lines of breastfeeding support. Research has shown that **support by the baby's father is a key factor** in establishing and continuing breastfeeding.

## If breastfeeding is natural, why do mothers need help to do it?

Like walking and talking, breastfeeding is natural and also learned with the guidance of others. In the past, girls learned about breastfeeding and caring for children by watching



the women around them mothering through breastfeeding. More recently, bottle feeding has become so widespread that some people may never see a baby breastfeeding. Common practices, such as medicated births, early use of bottles and pacifiers, scheduled feedings, and mother-baby separation can interfere with breastfeeding.

Today, a new mother may need help, guidance and support to overcome difficulties and doubts if they arise.

## How to help: What mothers have said...

- "I probably wouldn't have made it through those first tiring and emotional weeks if it weren't for my husband and his sense of humour."
- "He really took care of me in those early weeks. He nurtured me while I nurtured the baby."
- "He held one twin, skin-to-skin, in a sling while I nursed the other one. This eliminated the crying and lowered my stress level!"
- "He kept me company during lots of nursing sessions—both during the day and in the middle of the night. It was so lovely to have a chance to just sit and talk, a time for us to reconnect."

- "He brought me a glass of water each time I sat down to nurse the baby."
- "My spouse saw me struggling with breastfeeding. He encouraged me, saying, 'Hang in there; you can do it.' He didn't leap to the conclusion we needed formula. That strengthened my resolve, and made all the difference."

## How to help: What fathers have said...

- "At first we both found the new roles hard: she spent most of her time caring for the baby and I spent a lot of time running the house. I reminded us both that we would gradually get back on an even keel and that breastfeeding was really important—and definitely worth it."
- "I'm glad I felt strongly about breastfeeding before the baby was born, because after he arrived I had to step in to protect my partner's right and ability to feed the baby herself. I was amazed at how hospital procedures and off-hand comments by other folks undermined her confidence. It was a really vulnerable time for her and she needed someone to keep telling her that she could do it."
- "Our first baby did not latch on for the first three weeks. I was worried about the cost of renting a pump, but then I realized it was just a fraction of what we would spend on formula, not to mention the future costs of having a child who is sick more often than a breastfed baby. I got the pump and helped contact breastfeeding experts for her."
- "Just say YES! Mothers tend to be really in tune with what the baby needs. Even if it seems crazy or trivial, just say YES!"
- "At first I thought I would be left out if I couldn't feed the baby. Then I found there were many other ways I could bond with him. If he was crying with a wet diaper, I could fix it and make him happy again. If he was in pain with a burp, I could fix that too. If he needed to nurse, I brought him to his mother. The health and happiness that I know came from breastfeeding are worth the world and I'm glad I could help that happen."
- "I was resistant to co-sleeping at first, but when all of us started to get more sleep, I realized it was a temporary change I could live with."
- "I see the strength of the bond between my wife and daughter in their breastfeeding relationship. I tell everyone it makes my life easier, because my daughter is usually so happy and calm. And when she is not, breastfeeding is an instant fix!"



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## What else should I know? What else can help breastfeeding happen?

**Little things make a big difference.** A kiss, a smile or a cup of tea can do wonders.

**Know the basics** of breastfeeding (see Breastfeeding Basics) and where to find the reliable information you may need in the hectic days after the baby arrives. Some resources are [www.LLCC.ca](http://www.LLCC.ca), *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, Dr.

*Jack Newman's Guide to Breastfeeding* (J. Newman and T. Pitman), and *Becoming a Father* (William Sears).

### **Support, protect and promote:**

Let your partner know that you support her decisions. Show her

that you believe breastfeeding is normal and important through your actions and your words. If friends or family are not supportive of breastfeeding, act as a buffer so your spouse's efforts are not undermined. Tell others how proud you are of your wife's accomplishment. Support the breastfeeding relationship as long as child and mother want it to last.

**Tell** hospital staff that breastfeeding is important to your family. Find the extra supports you may need to meet your family's goals. Let friends and family know that mother, baby and father need some private time after the birth and in the early days.

### **The company of other breastfeeding mothers is helpful.**

Visit [www.LLCC.ca](http://www.LLCC.ca) for local LLLC Group meeting information or call 1-800-665-4324.

### **Find support for yourself so you can support your family.**

Some LLLC Groups hold Couples' Meetings or there may be other father-centred groups in your area.

**"Do everything within your power** to encourage and support the healthy breastfeeding relationship between your wife and your baby." (William Sears, pediatrician and father of eight, 2003)

## Breastfeeding Basics

- Human milk evolved over millennia for human babies, just as other mammals' milk evolved to feed their babies.
- Breastmilk is easy to digest. Baby needs to feed frequently and on cue; a minimum of 8-12 times in a 24-hour period is normal and builds a healthy milk supply.
- Between three days and six weeks, a healthy full-term baby who is getting enough milk produces 5-6 wet diapers (more if cloth) and at least 3 bowel movements the size of a \$2 coin per day.
- Breastfeeding is a perfect supply and demand system—the more breastmilk the baby drinks, the more milk the breasts make. This is why supplementation can reduce a mother's supply.
- Holding a baby skin-to-skin is good for baby's development, can improve mother's milk supply, and helps father and baby bond as well. ([www.kangaroomothercare.com](http://www.kangaroomothercare.com))
- Find out more at [www.LLCC.ca](http://www.LLCC.ca).

**For breastfeeding information contact:**



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