



CLS

The Corporate Lactation Services
Newsletter

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THE ROLE OF FATHERS (& OTHER PARTNERS) DURING BREASTFEEDING

by LAURIE WHEELER, RN, IBCLC, MAY, 2018

Father's first role, after the birth of his baby, might be considered protecting mother and baby and ensuring they each get the care and support they need to thrive. Many times the encouragement and support of the father makes a huge difference to mother and baby. Of course, fathers are important!

EACH PARENT HAS A ROLE

In addition to a baby's need for milk, a baby needs a home, and to bond with both parents to feel secure and to feel loved. Biologically, mother is the first secure home and source of nourishment – inside the womb. After birth, breastfeeding is a new experience for baby and parents – breastfeeding still involves a close connection to mother's body. Newborns will feed around 8-12 times per day as a means of getting exceptional nutrition (which is digested quickly and easily), immunities, and as an actual "survival skill" for maintaining closeness to mother. Mother's milk provides protection against viruses and bacteria and lowers the risk of common childhood infections (ear, respiratory, diarrhea), as well as lowers the number of sick doctor visits and hospitalizations. Breastfeeding reduces chances of allergies, asthma, obesity, diabetes and is linked to higher IQ. Frequent feeding during the first weeks is essential for long-term milk production, so mother does need help and support to meet baby's needs.

The first days and weeks are a time for mom and baby to become acquainted.

Getting mom and baby to appointments and "crowd control" can be important in the first weeks. This can include keeping too many well-meaning visitors from overwhelming mother and baby's need for rest. If at all possible, the first days and weeks should not be too busy and stressful. This is a time for mom and baby to become acquainted and spend time feeding and resting. It helps if Father is "handy around the house" or can organize helpers for shopping, cooking, cleaning.



IF MOM DOES ALL THE FEEDINGS, *HOW WILL I BOND?*

Bonding takes place first through touch, eye contact, carrying, cuddling, talking, reading, singing and, later, playing with baby. Babies respond to Dad's lower voice range and recognize Dad's voice from when they were in utero.

Touch, and especially skin-to-skin holding, is very important to bonding, and starts on the very first day. Fathers are encouraged to spend at least 30 minutes in skin-to-skin time with baby sometime during baby's first day. You may find you enjoy holding your baby skin-to-skin daily. This time is important for your baby's development also!

The bond between you and your baby may feel like it happens right away or it might develop over a period of time. Bonding is an individual experience and is different for every parent.

ROLES WILL EVOLVE

Very soon, your baby will "branch out" and be able to take a feeding from father and other caregivers. While waiting for that time, father and other caregivers may enjoy holding, bathing, diapering, massaging, and going to appointments with baby. Fathers and other caregivers may also sing and read to baby, as well as otherwise interacting with this new addition to the family. Bath time and infant massage time can be fun times for Dad and baby.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbCv6BBTV5c>

Even a baby who is a little fussy or fretful - maybe just tired at the end of a day - will seem to look for and root for the breast, but realize he/she is already full. Here Dad can step in to calm and cuddle baby, helping baby settle and fall asleep.

I WANT TO FEED MY BABY, TOO

Frequently, fathers and significant others are eager to participate in feedings. This is a next step after making sure that breastfeeding is going well, since that is the top priority for the health and well-being of baby. But the jobs of pumping, cleaning pump parts, storing and labeling milk, and cleaning bottles offers no less work for the mother. It takes time away from getting comfortable and confident with breastfeeding and doesn't allow Mom, Dad, and Baby to rest together.

Often just waiting about 4 weeks or so is enough time to ensure baby is breastfeeding well, is gaining weight, and that mother has established her milk production to meet baby's needs.

Therefore, after the 1 month pediatrician visit, mothers often begin to express and store milk, and father can begin to offer baby an occasional, or even daily, bottle of breastmilk. Offering formula instead of expressed mother's milk (unless medically necessary) will change baby's gut flora (important part of immune system), decrease overall milk production, and frequently leads to breast refusal. If formula supplementation is medically necessary, work with your consultant on a plan for improving the effectiveness of breastfeeding sessions and on increasing your own production.

OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN BABY’S LIFE

Often grandparents or special aunts/uncles/friends are part of the close-knit “inner circle.” Grandmothers often seem to know several soothing techniques and don’t seem afraid to bathe baby or wash hair. Grandmothers can also be a wonderful support as mother transitions into her new role, because sometimes moms question their ability to provide adequate nourishment for their baby.

Much new research has provided the foundation for breastfeeding guidance in the present, taking the place of outdated practice that often undermined a mother’s milk production. Fathers and others important to the family can help “read the signs” (see next section) and become familiar with what is normal for newborns based on the latest studies.

It’s important to review with your lactation consultant how to tell if baby is getting enough milk (avoiding unnecessary supplementation), how babies often cluster feed in the evenings, and how nighttime feedings are important for baby’s growth and mother’s hormones and milk production. Your lactation consultant will let you know when she is going to be calling, and in between those times, feel free to reach out to her.

Fathers and others important to the family can help to "read the signs" and become familiar with what is normal for newborns.

READ THE SIGNS

These are signs of infant well-being and of Mother adjusting well too. If these signs are not observed, then mother and baby need additional help, support, and follow-up.

Signs of infant well-being:

- At least 8 feeds in a 24 hour day – some babies feed 12 to 14 times in the early days and weeks.
- Evidence of baby swallowing actively during feeds and of breasts softening as baby takes in the milk.
- Baby is relaxed and content for at least 1-2 hours after most feeds.
- Baby has increasing wet and dirty diapers over the first 3-4 days of life.
- Baby is urinating at least 6 wet diapers each 24 hour period after Day 5.
- Baby is stooling at least 3-4 soft yellow seedy bowel movements per day after Day 4.
- Baby is not skipping any days for bowel movements. Charts or checklists are helpful.
- Baby is not having any dark or pinkish, orange, reddish color to urine.
- Baby has No yellow color to the skin (jaundice).
- Baby has pediatric follow-up arranged and is gaining weight at check-ups.

Signs of maternal well-being:

- Mother feels confident in her ability to care for and feed her infant.
- Mother's breasts are getting fuller over the first days and noticeably full by Day 4-5.
- Mother's nipples and breasts are not painful nor injured.
- Mother does not feel overwhelmed nor sad about caring for or feeding her infant.
- Family and friends are supportive of mother and providing some practical help with meals and chores.
- Mother has the phone number handy to her obstetrician or midwife, to her baby's pediatrician, and to her lactation consultant.



Contact us!

My Lactation Consultant's name & number are:

REFERENCES

See www.corporatelactation.com for products to support your breastfeeding needs.

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