

How to give breastfeeding support

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Janine Gard is a diploma-qualified birth educator (2005) and founder of Bellies to Babies antenatal and postnatal classes. She has helped more than 3700 parents prepare themselves mentally, emotionally and physically for their journey to parenthood and loves what she does. This week Janine talks about how to support a breastfeeding partner.



When it comes to breastfeeding, you might wonder what, if anything, you can do to support your partner and baby? The truth is you can make a huge difference.

For many women, their partner is their main source of support with breastfeeding. Many breastfeeding women give up sooner than they want to. You can be integral in keeping breastfeeding going. The more supportive you are, the longer your partner is likely to breastfeed and the more confident she'll feel.

While breastfeeding is a natural process, it is also a learned skill. Breastfeeding isn't always easy at first and can take a few weeks for both mum and baby to get used to. Some breastfeeding mums go through a rough patch, but good support and encouragement from you can help them get through it.

Why is breastfeeding important?

If your partner is breastfeeding your baby— or planning to— that's fantastic because breastmilk has so many benefits for babies.

For instance, breastmilk can help to reduce the risk of your baby getting infections and diseases. It also contains hormones that help your baby's development. It can also help lifelong protection for several cancers for mum and other serious health conditions and diseases.

Breastmilk provides abundant and easily absorbed nutritional components, antioxidants, enzymes, immune properties and live antibodies from your partner. Mum's more mature immune system makes antibodies to the germs to which she and your baby have been exposed. These antibodies enter her milk to help protect her baby from illness.

Breastmilk also contains substances that naturally soothe and calm them.

Overall, breastfeeding will have a positive impact on your baby's health. What's more, it can influence their health as an adult too. What do I need to know about

breastfeeding? You might find it helpful to know how breast feeding works and what normal behaviour is for breastfed babies. Here are a few quick and handy facts—

Babies are happier if they're fed as soon as they show signs of being hungry

Babies usually feed frequently (anything from eight to 12 times or more in 24 hours) in the early weeks, especially during the evenings

Some babies are slow feeders at first, but they get quicker (efficient) as they get older

The more a baby feeds, the more milk their mum makes because it's the removal of milk that drives the production of it

The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding for at least your baby's first six months and continuing until they are aged 2, along with solid foods.

Breastfeeding is also beneficial for toddlers because it gives them a health boost every time they feed. So your partner can breastfeed your baby for as long as they both want to.

Nipple soreness or pain during feeding might be a sign that a baby needs some adjustment to their latch at the breast. If there is soreness or pain when breastfeeding, talking to a health-care professional or lactation consultant can help

Your partner will enjoy feeding more when they are comfortable and relaxed

Breastfeeding makes travel easier. Breast milk is always clean and at the right temperature

Physical/emotional bonding between mum and baby is increased. Breastfeeding promotes more skin-to-skin contact, and more holding and stroking.