



IABLE
Institute for the Advancement
of Breastfeeding &
Lactation Education



Partner Support During Breastfeeding

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A supportive partner plays a vital role in the success of breastfeeding. Taking care of Mom helps her take care of herself and your infant. Here are some tips for partners:

- Tell her she is a good mother and you're proud of her.
- Make sure she is eating and drinking. Provide healthful snacks for her and prepare nutritious foods for her. When she sits down to nurse, refill her water bottle and see if she needs anything.
- Do the dishes, laundry, picking up around the house and care for other children.
- Arrange for a helper to come.
- Hold the baby skin to skin while Mom showers.
- Avoid suggesting a bottle. Partners want to help fix things but a bottle is often not the answer.
- Many times a support person will offer to feed the baby a bottle while Mom sleeps, however this can drop Mom's milk supply. If the infant is fed expressed breastmilk or formula from a bottle, it is best for Mom to pump that same day to keep her in balance with the baby's needs.
- There is so much more to do than feed the baby! Consider bathing the baby and cuddling the baby in between feedings. Try a slow, gentle-swaying dance with the baby to music that is calming.
- Try to be flexible – babies are unpredictable and can be inconvenient! Each baby and family is different and will find their own way of doing things. With trial and error your family will find what works for you. Each adult will do things their own way – there isn't one right way!
- Sometimes a baby will prefer Mom, and not want to be held as often by the partner. This is temporary and it's best to not force the issue. Keep offering those cuddles and baby will come around!
- Help care for older children. This is a great time to connect with older siblings, some of whom may be experiencing conflicted feelings about recent changes in the household.
- Mom can face many obstacles with breastfeeding such as frequent feedings, doubts about the baby getting enough milk, coping with daytime and nighttime feedings and may have thoughts of stopping. This isn't her problem alone, a partner's firm support and assistance are priceless!
- If Mom is struggling, help her get help! Encourage her to call a lactation specialist. A partner can also make that telephone call for her.
- It is normal Mom to experience baby blues, especially during the first month postpartum. If Mom is experiencing continued sadness, exhaustion or anxiety, it could be a sign of postpartum depression. Other symptoms may include moodiness, appearing overwhelmed, loss of motivation, difficulty enjoying fun activities, lack of animation, loss or increase in appetite, excessive weight loss, insomnia, panic attacks, difficulty concentrating, decreased self-esteem, decreased interest in the baby, less interest in socializing, and wishing life would end. If you are concerned that Mom has symptoms of postpartum depression, gently encourage her to speak to her healthcare provider. In addition, a valuable online educational resource Postpartum Support International, <http://www.postpartum.net/>