



Children and Families

Dads and breastfeeding

A leaflet for dads and dads-to-be

Why breastfeed?

- Breast milk is the most natural food for a baby – no manufactured food can possibly be the same
- It contains just the right amount of nutrients for your baby, and changes as she grows to meet her needs
- The milk changes during a feed from thirst quenching to hunger satisfying
- It's free, convenient and there are no bottles to clean and sterilise
- Breastfed babies grow up to have healthier adult lives
- Breast feeding is also good for mums, and helps protect against some sorts of cancer
- Breastfeeding burns an additional 500 calories a day

"I did feel a bit left out at the start, but I got involved in other ways and now I'm really good at settling him"

Sean

"I'm really proud of what Siobhan is doing for our baby, and am really happy that she's also at less risk of getting cancer when she's older"

Mike



"At first it was a bit awkward when other people called round and the baby wanted to be fed, but you can't see anything anyway"

Andrew

Breastfeeding the best start

- How you and your partner choose to feed your baby is a really important decision
- Any breast milk will be good for your baby – there are no rules around how long you can feed for, every day, week and month makes a difference
- Breastfeeding your baby provides more than food. Its also a lovely way to comfort and reassure him/her.

Babies are protected against:

- Ear and chest infections
- Diarrhoea
- Gastroenteritis and tummy upsets

Babies have lower risks of:

- Childhood diabetes
- Eczema, asthma and wheezing

Babies have:

- Better brain development
- Straighter teeth...and many other benefits

Mothers benefit from:

- Lower risk of breast cancer
- Lower risk of pre-menopausal ovarian cancer
- Stronger bones in later life
- Faster return to pre-pregnancy figure
- Lower risk of postnatal depression



You and your baby

The more you get involved with caring for your baby, the more quickly you will develop a strong bond. 'Your partner may be reluctant to hand over tasks - but bringing up a baby is a shared responsibility'. Babies often love the sound of their dad's voice and the security of being held in their arms and this can help settle baby down.

"Having a father is critical to the healthy development of a child. Being a father is critical to the healthy development of a man."

Terrence Real

Getting involved

If your baby is breastfed you will not be able to help with feeding initially, but experienced dads know that there are many other ways of caring for, and being close to, your baby. Here are some suggestions that might be useful to new dads.

- Change your baby's nappy
- Settle your baby after a feed by winding him
- Hold and soothe your baby
- Place your baby on your bare chest for skin-to-skin contact
- Give your baby a massage
- Carry your baby in a sling or baby carrier
- Talk, read and sing to your baby
- Take your baby for a walk in his pram
- Bath your baby

"I spent lots of time with Chloe, bath time was my special time with her. After she established her routine, Sarah expressed milk so I could feed her. I encouraged Sarah all the way. Breastfeeding worked for us. Knowing what breastfeeding was about helped a lot."

Darren

Your sexual relationship with your partner

Some men worry that breastfeeding will affect the physical side of their relationship with their partner. Some women lose interest in sex after having a baby and for most couples it is difficult to find the time and energy to make love. However, it is possible for you both to enjoy an active sex life whilst breastfeeding.

- It is a good idea for your partner to feed your baby first so that she is more comfortable and your baby is settled so you are less likely to be disturbed
- Remember that breastfeeding may make your partner's breasts feel more sensitive

Some men really like the changes in their partner's breasts during breastfeeding whereas others may be concerned that breastfeeding makes breasts less attractive, but there is no evidence that any breast changes due to breastfeeding are permanent.

Breastfeeding should not be a barrier when you and your partner decide the time is right to make love.

Your support is important

You can help your partner continue to breastfeed by:

- Making sure she is comfortable when feeding, and has a drink and a snack
- Explaining to family and friends the importance of breastfeeding, and making sure she is protected from other peoples opinions which may be undermining
- Practical help so that she can concentrate on feeding the baby
- Encouraging her – especially if she is very tired or finding things difficult
- Knowing where to get help – and asking for it
- Supporting her when feeding when out and about

“There was one stage when I was worried the baby wasn’t getting enough milk, but Craig was always there to support me and that helped a lot.”

Frances

Helping with your baby's feeds

After a few weeks, your partner may decide to express some milk so that you can give the occasional feed

Be aware that:

- to maintain a good milk supply, milk needs to be removed regularly either by breastfeeding or expressing
- going for long periods without expressing or feeding may reduce milk supply



"Darren was 100% behind me, he was always there to encourage me and tell me I was doing a good job. It made all the difference and I couldn't have done it without him. I expressed milk so Darren could enjoy the experience of feeding Chloe as well."

Not with your baby's mother?

Even if you are separated from your baby's mother, you are still the father of your child with all of the benefits and responsibilities that role entails. The first few weeks might be a bit difficult, as it's best for babies to be fed directly from the breast but later on you may be able to feed some expressed milk from a bottle, and it's important to remember that there are lots of other things you can do to help look after the baby.



Further information

If your partner is experiencing difficulties with breastfeeding, she can speak to her midwife or health visitor.

National Breastfeeding Helpline
(9.30 am– 9.30 pm daily): 0300 100 0212

If you want to find out more about breastfeeding, you may find these websites useful:

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/ www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/
www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/ www.nhs.uk/start4life
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/
pregnancy-and-baby-care.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/pregnancy-and-baby-care.aspx)

We especially wish to thank the following agencies for valuable information from their websites and leaflets:

The Leys Children's Centre (designed by C. Kalaja)

www.theleyschildrenscentre.org

Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland

www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk

Children North East Fathers Plus Resources:

www.fathers-plus.co.uk

How do I contact my health visitor?

The health visiting service is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Please contact your health visitor with any questions or concerns.

Please contact us if you would like the information in another language or different format.

Arabic يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق مختلف.

Bengali আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে

পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Urdu اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

Polish Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innej formie, skontaktuj się z nami.

Portuguese Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutro idioma ou num formato diferente.

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