

# **Making It Work**

## Family Members Supporting Breastfeeding





## **Making It Work:** Family Members Supporting Breastfeeding

Support from family members can help make it easier for new moms to continue breastfeeding...even after they return to work or school.

This support remains an important factor for the entirety of the breastfeeding journey. Here's how you can help!

Suggested citation: NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health. 2020. *Making It Work: Family Members Supporting Breastfeeding*. Raleigh, North Carolina.

North Carolina's Making It Work tools, adapted with permission from the New York State Department of Health, provide essential information for employers, mothers, their families, and community advocates to support breastfeeding.

## Benefits of Breastfeeding<sup>1</sup>

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### Research studies show that breastfed babies:

- Have fewer ear infections and respiratory infections
- Have fewer digestive problems and are less likely to be constipated
- Are less likely to develop cancer or diabetes in their lifetime
- Are less likely to be obese later in life
- Are less likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)



SOURCE: UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE

### Research studies show moms who breastfeed:

- May be more likely to burn up to 500 calories a day, which helps moms return to their pre-pregnancy weight
- Have a reduced risk of postpartum mood disorders
- May be less likely to develop breast cancer or ovarian cancer
- May be less likely to develop type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease

## What Breastfeeding Families Need

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Many women continue to breastfeed after they return to work or school. How is this possible? Moms breastfeed their baby when they are home and express their milk using a breast pump or by hand expression when they are away from the child. This is necessary to help moms to continue making milk and allows them to give their milk to their child when they are away. Your support will help moms feel confident and relaxed knowing they are giving their child the best they can, even after they return to work.

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1. Victora C, Bahl R, Barros A, França G, Horton S, Krasevec J, Murch S, Sankar M, Walker N, Rollins N. Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. *The Lancet*. 2016; 387(10017), 475-490.

## All Family Members Can Help

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Moms rely on the people closest to them — their family — for support with breastfeeding, especially when they return to work or school.

**Dads/Partners.** You have a role to make the mom feel special and important. Help her feel your love and emotional support. Tell her you are proud of her for giving your baby such a healthy start in life. Going back to work also adds new tasks to her day, which can make her feel tired. Your help and support at home will make things easier.

**Grandparents.** Moms look to their own parents for encouragement and support. Even if you did not breastfeed, you can show her you are proud of her. Many new grandparents like to take charge of the baby, but asking new moms what they would like help with is a great first step in providing the support they need. She might need a meal cooked, or help with the laundry, or she may want you to watch the baby while she takes a bath or a walk. Find little ways to show her you are proud of her. She'll never forget it!



SOURCE: UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE

### Here are some things family members can do to enjoy spending time with baby:

- Hold baby close
- Take baby for a walk
- Read to baby
- Play with baby
- Rock baby
- Bathe baby
- Dress baby in cute clothes
- Sing to baby

## Did You Know?

**You cannot spoil babies by holding them.** Holding babies actually helps babies become more independent later in life because their need for closeness is met while they are young and still developing. Letting babies cry actually increases their stress levels.

**Babies do not go into a deep sleep state until 20-30 minutes after they fall asleep.** If baby wakes up when you put him down, try holding and rocking him for about 20 minutes first.

**The best way to make milk is to breastfeed.** The more a mom breastfeeds, the more milk she will make. She can increase her amount of milk by breastfeeding, pumping, or hand-expressing more often.

**Babies do not need any other foods besides their mother's milk until they are 6 months old.**

**Women who breastfeed may find it easier to lose their pregnancy weight.**

*"My daughter is the mother of a 15-week-old baby girl. She is doing everything she can to give her baby a healthy start in life, including breastfeeding."*

—Grandmother, Chatham County

*"As a grandmother of 5 children, I say help those moms who want to breastfeed. It brings them closer to the child and keeps the child healthy."*

—Grandmother, Wake County



SOURCE: UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE

## Help to Prepare Mom for Work or School

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- Prepare meals and help with common household tasks such as housework and laundry so moms can get plenty of rest.
- Clean baby's diaper bag and restock it with fresh diapers and clothing.
- Clean pump parts so mom can focus on baby and other important tasks.
- Get baby ready for the child care provider to give mom a little extra time to get ready or to squeeze in an extra feeding before leaving for work.
- Don't forget to always check in with mom to learn other specific ways you can help. She'll be able to share best the ways that you can be most helpful.



## Ways to Offer Additional Support

- Tell a breastfeeding mom you are proud of her. For example:
  - “What a great mom you are to give your baby such a good start in life.”
  - “It’s obvious how much you love our baby. It makes me feel very proud. What can I do to make things easier for you?”
- Encourage her to continue breastfeeding for as long as she wishes. She is giving baby a gift that will last the child’s entire lifetime.
- Remind her to rest and eat healthy foods so she will have more energy.
- Foster her focus on family time as babies grow all too quickly.
- Encourage her to get help if she has questions or concerns with breastfeeding. If she doesn’t have time to do this, ask if she’d like your help in locating resources or someone to talk with.
- To find support from a peer counselor, lactation consultant, or other professional, ask the local hospital or the local health department for information, or visit:
  - [ncbfc.org/perinatal-region-map](http://ncbfc.org/perinatal-region-map) to find resources near where you live.
  - [uslca.org/resources/find-an-ibclc](http://uslca.org/resources/find-an-ibclc) to find a lactation consultant from the United States Lactation Consultant Association.
  - [portal.ilca.org/i4a/memberDirectory/index.cfm?directory\\_id=18&pageID=4349](http://portal.ilca.org/i4a/memberDirectory/index.cfm?directory_id=18&pageID=4349) to find a lactation consultant from the International Lactation Consultant Association.



SOURCE: UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE

### Did You Know?

**About 15–20% of all new moms experience significant sadness, anxiety, or depression in the year following a new baby. If she is struggling, she is not alone. Encourage her to discuss her feelings with her doctor. With help from her doctor, and with the right support, she will begin to feel better soon. For more information on postpartum depression, visit: [postpartum.net](http://postpartum.net).**

## If You'll Be Caring for the Baby

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Many grandmothers, dads, partners, and family relatives care for baby when mom returns to work. If you plan to help out with baby, here are some tips to make it easier and even more rewarding.

### Feeding a Breastfed Baby

- Breastfed babies eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. Follow baby's hunger signals rather than a schedule. Never force a feeding. It is okay if all the milk in a bottle is not finished. If you notice this happening regularly, prepare bottles with smaller amounts of milk so that it does not go to waste.
  - Breastfed babies may eat less at each feeding, and eat more often. This is because human milk is digested very easily. They also take different amounts at each feeding.
  - If you'll be using a bottle to feed baby, try offering it when baby is not so hungry or upset, or when baby is still a little sleepy.
  - Running some warm water over the bottle may also help; breastfed babies are not used to cold nipples.
- For more information on Responsive Feeding, visit: [sph.unc.edu/cgbi/responsive-feeding](https://sph.unc.edu/cgbi/responsive-feeding).
  - Breastfed babies are used to being held and feeling the closeness of mom's skin when feeding. Hold baby close when feeding with a bottle. Rather than pushing the nipple into baby's mouth, touch baby's lower lip and wait for him/her to open his/her mouth and draw it in.
  - Never prop a bottle or leave baby alone during a feeding.
  - Babies love to snuggle. Don't be surprised if baby acts hungry after the feeding. Baby may not need more food but more closeness.



## Supporting Mom

- If you are watching baby only for an hour or two, try not to give baby a full feeding. Mom's breasts may feel very full and she may want to breastfeed right away.
- If baby is getting hungry, try to calm him/her in other ways, or just offer a very small amount to take the edge off before mom arrives.
- If mom will be traveling home after picking up baby from you, provide her space to breastfeed before she leaves. Talk with her when she drops the baby off for care so that you know when she would like for you to feed baby.
- For more ideas, visit [wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/friends-and-family](http://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/friends-and-family).



SOURCE: UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE



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## How to Handle Human Milk

It is okay to handle breast milk, also known as human milk. It is food for baby that is full of infection-fighting ingredients, so you do not need to wear gloves or take special precautions.

Human milk does not look like infant formula. It may appear watery, have a bluish tint, or may look yellow when frozen. The cream will rise to the top of the milk during storage. Gently swirl the milk to mix it together before feeding it to the baby.

Human milk can be stored in a refrigerator or freezer and thawed as needed to meet the needs of baby. Carefully follow the guidelines for handling and storing human milk below. Breastfeeding moms work hard to express their milk, and it is too valuable to waste!

### Guidelines for Handling and Storing Human Milk<sup>2,3</sup>

Location	Duration Good for:	Guidance
Countertop, table	up to 4 hours if fresh; 1-2 hours if thawed, previously frozen	Cover containers and keep them as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	up to 24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times; limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	up to 4 days if fresh; up to 1 day if thawed, previously frozen	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
<b>Freezer</b>		
Freezer compartment of a refrigerator	up to 2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer where temperature is most constant.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	up to 6 months	
Separate deep freezer, chest or upright	up to 12 months	
<b>Leftover milk from a feeding (baby did not finish the bottle): Use within 2 hours after the baby is finished feeding, or discard it.</b>		

2. Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. (Revised 2017) Clinical Protocol Number #8: Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use for Healthy Full-Term Infants. Princeton Junction, New Jersey: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine.

3. Proper Storage and Preparation of Breast Milk. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. [cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm). Updated August 6, 2019. Accessed August 27, 2019.

## Remember<sup>2</sup>

- If there is unfrozen milk, use that first. If you are using frozen milk, be sure it is still good based on the guidelines for storing and handling. Also check to see if there is milk that is close to expiring that needs to be used first.
- If you will be adding fresh milk to a container of frozen milk, refrigerate it first since fresh milk is warm and can cause frozen milk to begin thawing.
- Thaw frozen milk in the refrigerator or by swirling in a bowl of warm water. NEVER microwave breast milk.
- Once milk is warmed, use it immediately.
- Do not re-freeze milk once it has been thawed.



## WIC Helps!

For more breastfeeding information visit:  
[nutritionnc.com/edres/index.htm](http://nutritionnc.com/edres/index.htm)

or find your local WIC agency:  
[nutritionnc.com/wic/directory.htm](http://nutritionnc.com/wic/directory.htm)

Refer a family member to the WIC Program  
here: [nutritionnc.com/wic/wic-referral.asp](http://nutritionnc.com/wic/wic-referral.asp)

**For more information about caring for a breastfed baby, check out the entire Making It Work Tool Kit series.**



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[ncbfc.org/making-it-work](http://ncbfc.org/making-it-work)



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