

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!

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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 Breastfeeding¹

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

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.

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

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

- 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 to find resources near where you live.
 - 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 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.



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ncbfc.org/making-it-work



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