



## Your partner wants to breastfeed?

### What's your role

Women often see you as their main source of support, but many partners say they are not sure how to help.

#### Why is breastfeeding important?

Breastfeeding has many advantages over formula feeding. It is healthier for both mother and baby, protecting against infection and disease. Also it is natural, free and convenient! Although formula milk contains necessary nutrients, breastmilk is much more than that and contains not only nutrients, but also important hormones, growth factors and antibodies.

And *breastfeeding* is much more than milk – it creates a close, loving bond between mum and baby which helps baby to grow and develop well.



#### Do partners really make a difference?

**YES! A mother is more likely to choose to breastfeed and have a successful breastfeeding relationship if you are positive about it and give her support.**

#### What can I do to not feel “left out”?

If breastfeeding increases mother and baby bonding, then won't partners miss out?

Parents do have different roles to play in looking after baby and it can take a while to get used to this. A close loving relationship comes from more than just feeding. Bonding is about being responsive and in-tune with baby, spending time in loving, interacting and nurturing.

There are many ways you can be involved with your baby.

- Skin to skin – produces bonding hormones in you both
- Talking/ singing to baby
- Carrying baby, perhaps in a sling
- Taking baby with you for a walk
- Winding (partners are often better at this anyway!)
- Soothing if restless (and this too!)
- Changing nappies
- Bathing – have baby in with you

And as baby gets older;

- Playing and entertaining





The important role of caring for your partner cannot be underestimated. She will appreciate **you** being there for her. It can be frustrating sitting still breastfeeding for long periods of time when you used to be up and active!

You can support your partner by

- Getting her a drink/ something to eat
- Making sure she is comfortable
- Being her “arms” while she is feeding
- Sitting with her
- Cuddling
- Talking together, reassuring her
- Doing chores, so mum can relax while breastfeeding baby
- Occupying older children
- Stopping hoards of visitors
- Getting help if things aren’t working



### Is there anything that partners should know about breastfeeding?

- Breastfed babies feed a lot – sometimes more than you might expect! Almost constantly over the first few days and 10-12 times day and night in the first few weeks. Babies feed more quickly as they get older.
- It is very rare for a mother to not have enough milk, even with twins. So have confidence!
- The more the baby feeds, the more milk the breasts make.
- Pain is usually a sign that the baby doesn’t have enough breast in his/her mouth. Breastfeeding should not hurt, seek help if the pain continues.
- Just because breastfeeding is natural doesn’t always mean it will be easy, it can take a few weeks for it to “click”.
- Both you and your partner are not alone – support is there if you need it.

### Uncomfortable about breastfeeding in public?

This is something you can discuss with her – remember it can take a few weeks to settle down as parents, and it may take time to feel comfortable feeding in front of other people. In reality, little or no breast is showing when baby is feeding and it looks more like just cuddling. Most venues should offer a private place to breastfeed if you prefer.

### Still want to share feeding?

It may be less important than you think if you are involved in other ways. In any case it’s better to wait a few weeks until breastfeeding is going well before introducing a bottle (or dummy) to avoid baby getting confused. And remember that giving formula will reduce the milk supply which can lead to the end of breastfeeding. After about 6 weeks she could express her milk for you to give by bottle so that the baby avoids the risks of formula milk but still gets the benefits of breastmilk.

