

Breastfeeding

One of the biggest decisions a new mom has to make is whether or not to breastfeed. The benefits of breast milk include its antibodies that help protect babies from SIDS, illness, and germs, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Infant formula is unable to exactly match the chemical makeup of breast milk -- particularly human milk's disease-fighting cells, antibodies, and hormones.

Top 5 Tips for Breastfeeding, from OB/GYN Dr. Suzanne Gilberg-Lenz

1. Get plenty of rest and fluids: a stressed-out, overwrought new mom really does depress the milk let-down reflex. So, how much worse can "relax" be as far as advice goes? Not much. Just do the best you can to shut the door and get some shut-eye.
2. Try some old-fashioned remedies: mother's milk teas and other natural medicines do help increase milk production -- the important constituents are common traditional herbal remedies such as fennel, fenugreek, alfalfa, dandelion, stinging nettle, and blessed thistle. Of course, check with your physician before using these. Some pharmaceuticals can also be prescribed by your doc or midwife -- domperidone and Reglan for short courses have also been shown to increase milk production.
3. Get help and support. Is there another woman in your family, neighborhood, or community that has successfully breastfed? Or is motivated to help you do so? Bring her in! Can you afford a lactation consultant (your insurance may cover this service)? As they say, it takes a village. When I started breastfeeding my first child, I had a really hard time those first few days home from the hospital. My pediatrician literally parked me in her office for HOURS and popped in and out as I worked on this new skill and she saw patients! Needless to say, my kids' pediatrician is an amazing woman ... but knowing that someone cared and thought I would be able to do this made a huge difference. As a new parent, it is so critical to ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT! Being a successful parent means mustering all of the available resources. Learn this lesson early on and save your ego for another lifetime.
4. Is it true that the best way to off-load the lifetime of dioxin you have accumulated is by breastfeeding? Unfortunately, the answer is yes ... does that mean you should NOT breastfeed? ABSOLUTELY NOT! Sorry, infant formula giants, breast milk is best -- it has immune factors, fats, and proteins as well as minerals and vitamins that no amount of technology can reproduce or improve on. If breastfeeding is at all possible: DO IT. Even if you mix breast with bottle, it is better than nothing at all.
5. Ready to wean? Go slow! Drop a feed every 3 days, use cold packs and compresses, and wear a tight sports bra. Herbs such as black walnut, sage, and

yarrow are purported to help diminish milk production and flow, but **DO NOT TAKE THESE HERBS WHILE BREASTFEEDING** and again, check with your doctor or midwife.

The United States Department of Health & Human Services cites rare cases when breastfeeding is not advisable, such as when a baby suffers galactosemia or if the mother has HIV, tuberculosis, is taking antiretroviral medications, diagnoses with human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I or type II, uses an illicit drug such as cocaine, is taking prescribed cancer chemotherapy agents, such as antimetabolites, or is currently undergoing radiation therapies.

What Moms Can Do about Breastfeeding

Momlogic friend and OB/GYN Dr. Suzanne Gilberg-Lenz shares her perspective about breastfeeding:

Here's an idea: go sleepless for several days on end, experience some of the most extreme physical and emotional sensations EVER, push a large squiggling bundle out of your nether regions, or maybe have someone make you numb from the waist down and pull it out ... OK, now you are ready to learn a totally foreign, new skill that involves your tender little nipples and a creature that is completely dependent on you for sustenance!

Breastfeeding is one of the most important experiences of parenthood. For those who are able to provide nutrition and love all in one, it can be profoundly satisfying, but it can also be confusing, troublesome, not as easy as it looks, and even painful.

Seems like a recipe for disaster? It might be. But take a deep breath and chew on the following (sorry for the mixed metaphor ... but you know what I mean).

Other tips for success in addition to the top 5 tips for breastfeeding include:

- Keep nipples clean, dry, and protected with a lanolin product. No harsh chemical or soaps should get near those sensitive little things. Gently wipe your sweet little baby's microbe infested-saliva away after each feed, and leave a drop of your naturally antibacterial milk in its place. Lanolin can also be applied -- but remember that too much moisture breeds bacteria.
- The two most effective means of preventing mastitis (breast infection) are by preventing nipple cracks (see above) and feeding or pumping on a regular basis the first few months of breastfeeding while the milk supply is establishing itself.
- Trouble with nipple pain? Get on that immediately! Is it just that this is new and the area is sensitive? Or is the latch incorrect and damaging your nipple? Again, ask for help and get evaluated ASAP by an experienced lactation expert, postpartum doula, or other health professional.

Are you weirded out about boobs, babies, and sex? It is so normal to wonder about this ... my advice is just go with it -- the breastfeeding experience is very intimate and satisfying and totally non-sexual. Others may have their own discomfort or even curiosity about it. Your job is to feed your baby. Think of this as a good opportunity to improve on your ability to selectively ignore; this skill will come in handy later on in parenting....

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Related Momlogic Stories on Breastfeeding

1. [The Case Against Breastfeeding](#)
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Additional Resources for Breastfeeding

- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [La Leche League International](#)