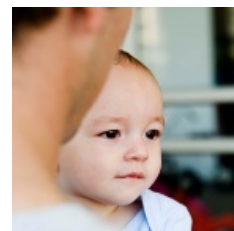




Dad's Role in Breastfeeding

Let's say you and mom have talked about it and decided to go with breastfeeding (</english/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/default.aspx>). There are tons of things you can do to help, beginning even before the baby is born. While breastfeeding is instinctive, there can be a lot to learn to make sure it goes as well as possible. Many hospitals, obstetricians, pediatricians (</English/ages-stages/prenatal/decisions-to-make/Pages/Finding-a-Pediatrician.aspx>), and freestanding lactation centers offer breastfeeding classes, which they encourage expectant fathers to attend. The more you know about nursing, the more helpful you can be when the time comes.



Successful nursing depends on a host of factors, many of which you can help with.

- **Positioning is key.** Mom may need a pillow or help propping up to get baby lined up just right. At that moment she's probably not in the best position to jump up and grab a pillow for support from across the room—you're on it!
- **Quench her thirst.** In addition to all the other things prolactin does, it often causes mom to feel intensely thirsty just as her milk is really starting to flow. Does she have a glass of cold water? You know what to do.
- **Be a hero.** Nursing goes best when mom is relaxed and feeling happy about her baby. Can you adjust the lighting? Put on some music? Rub her back? These are all opportunities to be a hero.

Gastrocolic reflex

If you really want to earn your cape, you'll remember the gastrocolic reflex (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Babys-First-Days-Bowel-Movements-and-Urination.aspx>). This is the medical term for the way the body makes room for incoming food by eliminating waste. In other words, it's not your imagination that your baby poops every time she nurses. Step in to handle this issue regularly and you can guarantee mom will be bragging about you to anyone who will listen. Seriously, this is the stuff women talk about—just run with it.

Listening

Listening, of course, is an especially important way you can help. Nursing may be natural, but it can also be quite frustrating and uncomfortable, especially at first (</English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/pages/Settling-In-The-First-Few-Weeks-of-Breastfeeding.aspx>). Mom's nipples may crack and bleed; her breasts can become uncomfortably engorged or even infected. You can help here, too, bringing her ointment or preparing warm compresses. But at times it's even more important that you just listen and offer sympathy. Your support may literally make the difference in helping mom overcome the challenges of nursing.

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