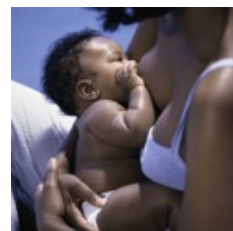




Nursing Supplies

Throughout most of human history, mothers have successfully breastfed their babies without the help of nursing pillows, breast pads, or even rocking chairs. Our bodies, and our children's bodies, are well designed to make nursing a simple and rewarding process. Still, some supplies can make life as a nursing mother easier, if they fit into your budget. (Nursing equipment also makes wonderful baby gifts.)



Nursing Bras

A well-made nursing bra that comfortably supports your enlarged breasts can be useful. It is difficult to predict what size nursing bra you will need, but take your best guess and purchase at least one or two while pregnant to have for the hospital. After childbirth you can be fitted for one, which should never be tight or constricting.

Nursing bras have front flaps that can be detached with one hand (while the other is supporting the baby) and pulled open for nursing. Outer clothing designed for nursing provides openings for the baby to access the breast and is a practical idea for mothers concerned about nursing discreetly in public.

Both nursing bras and clothing are available at maternity shops, in mother-child clothing catalogs, and at many department stores. Of course, shirts that can easily be lifted up and blouses that unbutton from the bottom up also work quite well.

Breast Pads

Disposable or washable breast pads, which can be slipped inside the bra cup to absorb any milk that leaks out between feedings, are useful for women whose breasts leak a great deal or who sometimes find themselves away from their babies at a regular feeding time. Avoid pads with plastic liners that impede the flow of air around the nipples and hold the moisture in, which can irritate the nipples. Breast pads can be purchased at most pharmacies and grocery stores—though a folded piece of absorbent cloth works almost as well.

Positioners and Other Equipment

While not necessary for successful breastfeeding, equipment to help you hold, cuddle, and soothe your baby can be a welcome addition to a nursery. Some mothers find that a custom-made nursing pillow, designed to help you position your baby properly and hold her for an entire feeding without tiring your arms, is easier than trying to arrange ordinary pillows or cushions. (Nursing pillows come in various shapes and sizes, so you may want to try out several before choosing one that suits you.)

A footstool raises the level of your lap, bringing your baby closer to your breast. It also helps keep your back straight, which may make you more comfortable. Some new mothers enjoy a rocking chair or glider to use in the baby's room in anticipation of those precious moments when a nursing session blends into sleep.

Other pieces of optional equipment include a baby sling or carrier that frees your hands while keeping your baby close enough to nurse, and a bassinet for keeping your sleeping infant beside your bed. You can find these items in most baby supply stores and baby equipment catalogs.

Please remember, however, that special equipment and furnishings are all extras. All you really need to nurse successfully are your breasts and a hungry baby.

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