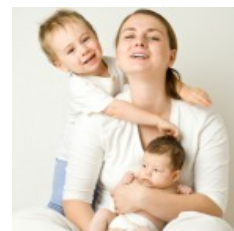




## Managing Older Siblings While Breastfeeding

Many women who breastfeed their newborns wonder how their older children will respond to nursing sessions and worry about how to keep older siblings occupied during frequent early breastfeeding sessions. It's safe to assume that all your children will show a healthy curiosity about this amazing and beautiful manner of feeding a brand-new baby. As long as you explain the nursing process in simple language and maintain a matter-of-fact approach to their questions and their desire to watch the baby breastfeed, such "family time" may turn out to be a positive and educational experience for all.



Don't be surprised if your older children tend to hover nearby during nursing sessions or even try to climb into your lap. Include them if you can by talking about how you used to breastfeed them (if you did), giving them a little hug with your free arm, telling them a story, or watching while they draw you a picture, work in a workbook, or play with a toy.

Some mothers find that nursing sessions are wonderful times to listen to music or children's stories with their babies' siblings. In this way, nursing time can be used to draw closer to all the children, not just the new one. Older children may also be grateful for the chance to express the feelings of closeness that breastfeeding inspires by folding laundry nearby, getting you a glass of water, holding the baby while you prepare to nurse, or otherwise contributing to their family's care.

If your toddler or preschooler asks if she can try nursing, the choice is obviously yours. In most cases, a child who is no longer breastfed may find the experience too strange to try more than once. She will probably not remember how to nurse and will run off, satisfied, after a quick experiment.

If you already have a nursing toddler who may not want to relinquish the breast when your new baby enters the family, or if you feel that this is not the time to begin weaning, you may decide to *tandem-nurse* breastfeed both the toddler and the newborn. If so, be sure to inform your newborn's pediatrician of your decision so your infant's growth can be monitored more closely.

Keep in mind that while the older child can receive foods and liquids from other sources, your infant depends entirely on your breast milk for her nutrition. Therefore, you should offer the breast to your infant first, and nurse your older child only after your infant has had her fill. Also watch your own nutrition and energy levels more closely. You will need to eat well enough to support the production of extra breast milk and get the additional rest necessary to handle the extra demands on your body. Your baby's pediatrician will be aware of all of these issues and can help you deal with them.

You may wonder whether the newborn will still receive the advantages of colostrum during tandem nursing. Analysis of mother's milk shows that a mother who delivers a newborn does produce colostrum and milk designed to meet the needs of the newborn, even though the mother is still nursing a toddler. This offers the desired advantages for the newborn but no adverse consequences for the older child.

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