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**Breastfeeding 101: Nursing Basics for New Moms**

**By Barbara A. Eastom Bates**

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Making the choice to breastfeed your new baby is one of the most important and far-reaching decisions you will make as a new mother. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant nutrition for the first year of life.

The current AAP breastfeeding policy states, "Human milk is uniquely superior for infant feeding and is species-specific; all substitute feeding options differ markedly from it." Why?

As acknowledged by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the exact chemical make-up of breast milk remains unknown and cannot be duplicated. Each year, synthetic baby milks are found to be nutritionally deficient as scientists expand their knowledge of human milk.

Some of the known benefits of breastfeeding are:

\* Breastfeeding is your baby's perfect nutrition.

Breastmilk is a living substance that changes to meet your baby's nutritional needs, both during individual feedings and as he or she grows. Plus, you never have to worry about breastmilk being recalled for contamination.

\* Breastfed babies have higher IQ's.

Formula feeding is associated with lower IQ's and cognitive development. A recent study found, on average, children who were breastfed to have a three to five point IQ advantage over their formula fed peers.

\* Breastfed babies (and mothers!) are healthier.

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Breastfeeding is proven to reduce risk of infection and disease by aiding in immune system development. Breastfed infants have lower incidences of asthma, gastrointestinal illness, diabetes, cancers, and are less likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). They are additionally better able to absorb ingested nutrients, and receive greater immunity from childhood immunizations. Breastfeeding also lowers a mother's lifetime risk of many cancers.

### Preparing to Breastfeed

Even though breastfeeding is a completely natural way of feeding your baby, knowing how to do it properly is a learned skill and takes practice. How can you prepare for a successful nursing experience?

- \* Take a class.

Most hospital's and birthing centers offer a variety of classes to new mothers on parenting, birthing and breastfeeding. Check your local offerings and sign up in advance. Classes often fill up rapidly, so don't wait.

- \* Read good books.

Many excellent titles are available to answer all the questions you forgot to ask your health care provider (and those you were too embarrassed to). Consider, "The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding," by Gwen Gotsch, Anwar Fazal, Plume, Judy Torgus.

- \* Think about what you'll need to make life easier.

Breastfeeding has the advantage of being the most simplistic way of feeding a baby—no bottles to wash and carry or formula to buy. But that doesn't mean a few well chosen accessories can't enhance the experience. Will you want others to be able to help with feedings, or do you have plans to return to work after your baby's birth? A hospital-grade breast pump might be in order. Might you be more comfortable during long nursing sessions having a nursing pillow or foot stool? How about breastfeeding in public? Consider the options of a sling or nursing cape for discreet public feedings—and don't forget to be sized for a properly fitting nursing bra.

### Birth and Beyond

Your baby has arrived and you're ready to put all your months of preparation to the test. Remember:

- \* The lactation consultant is your friend.

Many hospital's and birthing centers (and pediatrician's offices too!) have lactation consultants on staff that will be happy to get you and your baby off to a healthy start in your nursing relationship. Don't miss the opportunity to meet with a consultant for practical, hands-on advice about the mechanics of breastfeeding.

\* Keep score.

Unlike bottlefeeding, you can't measure how much milk your baby is getting through breastmilk, so keep count of your baby's wet and dirty diapers to make sure he or she is receiving adequate nutrition. Although it is very rare a mother does not produce enough milk to feed her baby, if you have any questions, be sure to contact your pediatrician.

\* Give it time.

Nursing your baby is a dance that takes time to learn. Though some babies are champion nursers from the beginning, many new moms find it takes some effort to perfect the skill. The first few weeks are often the most difficult, but if you experience problems, don't give up. Given the right assistance, the vast majority of woman can successfully breastfeed their babies. Meet with a lactation consultant or attend a local La Leche League meeting. Utilize the support of other nursing mother's.

Most of all, pat yourself on the back for making the choice to give your baby the best start in life you can offer, and health benefits that will last a whole life through.

Barbara Eastom Bates is the author of the upcoming release, "Basic Training for Brides-to-Be," and editor-in-chief of Operation Military Spouse,

### **Tips For Discreet Breastfeeding In Public**

**By Carrie Lauth**

If you're a new Mom who is nursing your baby you may be nervous about doing so in public.

Or perhaps you are disturbed by media reports of women who are harassed for breastfeeding in public and are considering pumping your milk to give your baby when you leave home.

Here are some tips for discreet breastfeeding that have worked for many Moms. Hopefully they will help you feel more comfortable nursing in public so you can avoid the inconvenience of pumping and preparing bottles.

1) Before you have your baby, attend a La Leche League or other breastfeeding support group meeting.

Unfortunately in our Society that gives lip service to the benefits of breastfeeding, it is still rare to see Moms nursing in public, and so most of us grow up having our own babies never having seen another woman nurse.

Going to an LLL meeting and seeing how other Moms nurse their babies discreetly and confidently can

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boost your own confidence. They can also share with you tips that will make nursing in public easier for you.

### 2) Invest in a baby sling.

These are wonderful for making life with a baby easier all around, but one thing they're great for is discreet breastfeeding. I can't count the times someone approached me in a store and commented on my baby having no idea that s/he was latched on and nursing! The fabric of the sling can be adjusted to come up over the baby's head (yet most babies don't mind this like they do a blanket), or you can use the extra fabric on the "tail" to cover baby.

### 3) After your baby is born, practice nursing in front of a mirror or a friend to perfect your technique.

Once you and baby are getting to be old pros at the latch on, you can most likely do so in just a couple of seconds.

### 4) Nurse at the first signs of hunger.

A nursing baby generally draws less attention than a screaming one! So latch your baby on as soon as you notice that s/he is hungry...rooting, sucking on fist, grimacing face, etc. A crying baby also makes you nervous and you and baby may take longer to get latched on comfortably.

### 5) Try turning your body away while you latch on.

If you're sitting at a table in a restaurant, simply turn your body away from the table briefly while you latch baby on, then resume your normal position.

### 6) Try nursing clothes.

These are designed to cover your belly for more discreet breastfeeding. Or simply wear a thin top under a cardigan or other shirt. You can also make your own nursing top by cutting slits in a tank and wearing it under another shirt.

### 7) Bring a book or large purse to set in your lap to camouflage.

Your diaper bag would also work. Set it in front of baby on your knees while you latch baby on. Or hold a book so that your baby's head and your breast are out of view.

And lastly...

### 8) Be confident!

You are doing something that is best for you and baby and that women all over the world for thousands of years have done. Be proud of yourself and give passersby a warm smile. You'd be surprised how often people will smile back or even approach with a commendation or anecdote about their own

children.

Enjoy nursing your baby!

Carrie Lauth publishes a newsletter for Moms doing things the natural way. Get your free copy at

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