



## **ROLE OF THE FATHER IN BREASTFEEDING**

Deciding to breastfeed may be a decision made by both parents, however most fathers believe that breastfeeding doesn't require their participation. The truth of the matter is the father plays a vital role in the success of the mother's nursing relationship with their baby. Whether she succeeds or fails depends highly on the father's involvement. Never underestimate the importance of the father's role in the wondrous breastfeeding experience.

The most fatherly thing a man can do during this time is to be available to his partner and support her in her new role as mother. He can arrange to take off as much time as possible from his job to be with his new family during the early weeks. The most important responsibility parents have during this time is to devote themselves to caring for this miraculous new life. The father can support his partner by freeing her from other responsibilities so that she can give her full attention to learning how to nurse. He can take pride in knowing he has chosen a loving and devoted partner who has become a loving and devoted mother. He can appreciate what she is trying to accomplish and have confidence in her. He can stand by her and admire her womanly strength and perseverance in getting through difficulties. He can dispel her doubts, protect her from criticism, and reassure her that she is doing the right thing. Most importantly, a father should be the mother's source of encouragement and support during difficult times. When a father supports his partner's desire to continue breastfeeding, he gives mother and baby a precious gift. Later on down the road, he will be rewarded for his efforts.

It is important for the father to realize that he has new responsibilities towards his partner and his child. He needs to understand that the new mother is recuperating from the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth and adjusting to hormonal changes in her body. All this may affect her mood. She may be more irritable, forgetful, and distracted, and some fathers may feel neglected and resent the fact that she is spending most of her time with the baby. But it is important to remember that during this newborn period the baby's needs must take top priority. Fathers can rest assured that this transitional time won't last forever and they will be appreciated for supporting their partners' efforts to breastfeed. A father can sit back and enjoy the beauty of watching his partner nourish their child with her own body and see their child thrive.

Small favors make a big impression in the eyes of an exhausted new mother. The father should make every effort to take the initiative and help out with household responsibilities. He can help monitor the baby's progress and make sure the new mother eats well and rests. He can also help with baby care responsibilities. He should take every opportunity to hold, comfort, bathe, dress, burp, and entertain the baby, as well as change the baby's diapers, since this is his chance to start developing his own special relationship with his child. When a father nurtures his

baby and becomes attuned to his needs during these early years, he will have a positive influence on his child's future growth and development and will create a strong family bond.

A new father has a great many demands being placed on him, and at times it may seem difficult and overwhelming. It is important for him to seek out his own support system. He may look to friends and family members for emotional support and reassurance. It helps to seek out other fathers who have had a nursing child, so he can share his feelings and know that he is not alone. Once the new father accepts the situation, he will find himself rising to the occasion and feeling proud of the valuable contribution he is making to his new family.

Finally, fathers can appreciate the advantages of having a breastfed baby. Since fathers are relieved of the responsibility of shared middle-of-the-night bottle feedings, their nights will be less disrupted. And because breastfeeding is handy, timesaving, and convenient, outings will be much easier for everyone. Overall, breastfed children are smarter, healthier, and require fewer medical expenses. In addition, breastfeeding saves money on the cost of purchasing infant formula, an average of \$100 a month for the first year after birth.

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