Contact

If your partner is experiencing problems with breastfeeding, she should contact her health visitor, midwife or infant feeding co-ordinator.

Helplines

National Breastfeeding Helpline
0300 100 0212

La Leche League Helpline
0845 120 2918

NCT Breastfeeding Helpline
0300 330 0771

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers
08444 122 949

You’ll also find information on the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk
and at www.nhs.uk/start4life

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Your support is important
These days, more and more new mums choose to breastfeed their babies. If your partner decides to breastfeed, your help and support will be really important in ensuring that she is successful. Breastfeeding really does give your baby the best possible start in life and it’s good for your partner’s health too.
- It provides your baby with natural protection from infections and diseases, and breastfed babies are less likely to be obese
- It uses up to 500 calories a day and can help your partner to get back into shape
- It saves money – formula and equipment can be expensive
- It saves time - there’s no washing up or sterilising of equipment
- It can help to build a strong bond between mother and baby
- Women who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer

Getting to know your baby
Dads can sometimes feel left out when their partner decides to breastfeed. Try to remember that breastfeeding is just one aspect of caring for your baby. There are plenty of other ways that you can get involved.

Bathing your baby, cuddling them, singing or playing with them will help you to get closer. Changing baby’s nappy or taking them for a walk will also give you time to get to know your child and allow your partner some time to herself.

How can you help?
Some women give up breastfeeding earlier than they want to. The more support you give, the longer your partner is likely to breastfeed.
- Don’t put pressure on yourself or your partner to ‘get back to normal’. You both need time to enjoy being parents and to work out new ways of doing things.
- Your partner will find it easier to breastfeed if she is free from stress. Try and take things easy, don’t get too stressed, and make sure that your partner doesn’t have more visitors than she can cope with.
- Share the load – help out with the cleaning, shopping and other household chores as much as you can.

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Some women give up breastfeeding earlier than they want to. The more support you give, the longer your partner is likely to breastfeed.

- Make sure that your partner is eating properly. You can help by making a sandwich or a simple meal and by seeing that she has plenty of water or soft drinks throughout the day.
- Taking your baby away for a cuddle or out for a walk will give your partner a break.
- Most new mums worry about whether they are doing things right and many go through a tough patch or experience problems. Just being there and supporting her at difficult times can be a great help.

What can you do if things seem to be going wrong?
Breastfeeding is a totally natural process but it’s normal for new mums and dads to have concerns and some mums do experience problems from time to time. If you know what to expect, then you can offer your partner the support and reassurance she needs to carry on feeding your baby successfully.

Breastfed babies normally feed more often than formula-fed babies. Breast milk is perfect for babies and it’s more easily digested than formula milk. As a result, breastfed babies tend to be awake and need feeding more often. Your baby will want to feed between eight and 12 times in a 24-hour period. This may be hourly at times, and often in the early evening.

New mums and dads often worry that their baby is not getting enough milk. This is because you can’t see how much your baby is taking in at each feed. The stomach of a new baby is about the size of a marble, so small, frequent feeds are perfect. If your baby is producing plenty of wet and dirty nappies, it’s a sign that they are getting what they need.

Some women do experience pain when breastfeeding. Pain can be a sign that the baby is not in the correct position for feeding. Encourage your partner to speak to her health visitor or infant feeding adviser about this, as they may be able to give you advice and support that will make all the difference. And remember, as your experience and confidence grows things usually settle down into a routine and become much easier.

If your partner is considering stopping breastfeeding early on, encourage her to keep going. Be positive and praise the progress she’s made so far. Providing reassurance will help boost her confidence.

Other family members may disagree with your partner’s decision to breastfeed. Some people do have strong views about breastfeeding and its benefits and this may put you both under pressure. Share this leaflet with them so that they understand your reasons and how they can support you and your partner in the choice you have made.

You may feel a bit left out because you can’t get involved in feeding. But there are lots of things you can do to support your partner, like helping out around the house. Why not talk to your partner about expressing her breast milk so that you can give your baby a feed?

Hearing a new baby in the house can be challenging and difficult. When times are tough, you or your partner may consider switching to formula feeding. Do speak to your health visitor or infant feeding adviser about this, as they may be able to give you advice and support that will make all the difference. And remember, as your experience and confidence grows things usually settle down into a routine and become much easier.

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At first I felt very left out and there wasn’t much I could do to help. As time went on I learned how to give him a bath and change the odd nappy. I was really good at getting him off to sleep when he wouldn’t settle for my partner. 11

James, Darlington