

Things Partners Can Do to Support the Breastfeeding Dyad

Mama has two jobs: Feed the baby, allow her body to heal.

You have three jobs:

1. Protect the Milk Supply
2. Focus on Comfort
3. Problems Have Solutions

Lifesavers

Understand mama's breastfeeding goals. Discuss the values behind the goals so you can best support this relationship.

If mama is unable to hold baby immediately after birth, you may need to support baby as s/he breastfeeds for the first time. Skin to skin with dad is the next best thing to skin-to-skin with mama.

<http://www.kangaroomothercare.com/birth-kmc.aspx>

The first 72 hours mama should breastfeed as often as possible. This is easiest if she is able to be skin-to-skin with baby. Help her watch for cues if baby is in a sidecar or bassinet.

If baby feeds away from the breast, **mama needs to pump for an equivalent number of feedings at approximately the same time** to protect milk supply.

Breastfeeding mamas need an extra 500 calories per day, per baby. Whether you're an expert chef or not, this is your chance to feed the family. Make some PB&J sandwiches before you leave in the morning, or go crazy and make some beef barley soup. Something mama can easily eat one-handed that doesn't require effort.

If mama starts to complain of nipple pain, heat, or other discomforts, help her schedule an appointment with an IBCLC to assess the situation. If they are not immediately available, call the La Leche League hotline.

Schedule 15 minutes of "relationship time" per week. This is time spent together while baby is sleeping or with a caregiver. Don't talk about baby or parenting, focus on YOUR relationship.

Remember or reference what you learned in class, or what you have read at REPUTABLE sites (see references). Dr. Google is no one's friend, but these trusted resources can help you troubleshoot.

Help mama meet her breastfeeding goals. If she wants to make it to six months, a year, or beyond, be her advocate with family members or friends who suggest alternatives.

Little Things

Look for signs of a good latch if mama has difficulty seeing. Look for the “U” shape in the side of the mouth instead of the “V” shape.

Mama's in charge of intake, **you're in charge of output**. Make sure to accurately document baby's bowel and bladder habits for the first ten days (or longer if required by your pediatrician). Basic guidelines: Day 1: 1 wet, 1 dirty. Day 2: 2 wet, 2 dirty. Day 3: 3 wet, 3 dirty. Day 4 and beyond: at least 6–8 wet/6–8 dirty. (there is a great printout linked on the resources page)

Help set up a nursing basket that can go wherever mama is. Items to consider adding are: tissues, chapstick, water bottles, one-handed snacks for mama, e-reader, phone, chargers, burp rags, remote control, hair bands.

Mama gets special breastfeeding time, but breastfeeding team captain can take charge of bath time. Learn a little bit of infant massage and get some good bonding time in yourself!

If and when mama decides to pump, remind her that it can sometimes take several tries before she gets an ounce of milk. Her body knows that the pump isn't the baby, but that doesn't mean she should give up. Cover the milk-catching bottles with a cloth, give her something that smells like baby, and maybe even try a foot rub to help her relax. Once she establishes a good pumping routine, you will have the opportunity to feed the baby, too!

Help encourage mama to meet up with other mamas who are breastfeeding. There are lots of wonderful places where breastfeeding mamas gather, like La Leche League, Mom & Me yoga, and stores like Baby Cotton Bottoms.

Sometimes mama can get into unusual postures while breastfeeding. Help her find a comfortable position by supporting her with pillows or creating a “nursing nook”. Shoulder rubs are great, too!

Steer the team: you are the captain of the breastfeeding support team. Rather than allowing “helpers” to get in the way, give them ideas of how you really need help:

- Use resources like MealBaby or **ask a friend** to coordinate meal drop off
- Other services like Door to Door Organics deliver fresh produce on a weekly or every-other-week schedule.
- Walgreens, Amazon, and others deliver tissues, toilet paper, dry food goods, shampoo and everything else you can possibly need. You might take advantage of their recurring order feature to make sure you never run out of these supplies.
- Consider hiring a cleaning service to come in once a week for the first few weeks postpartum or use my A list, B list documents to coordinate the support of friends.
- Set up an email autoreply that lets friends and family know you'll get back in touch after 12 weeks postpartum.
- Encourage your friends to contact you via email or social media rather than phone or text so that they do not interrupt important sleep.