



**Father knows best?**

Research shows a woman's decision to start breastfeeding and how long she continues to nurse is strongly influenced by her significant other's attitude.

***A supportive environment can be critical to a nursing mom's success.***

# Breastfeeding:

## *A Family Affair* By Stacy Whitman



# a

s a vegetarian passionate about healthy eating, Kira Kim was determined to provide her firstborn, Soren, with the very best nutrition—which, of course, meant breastfeeding. But after a traumatic emergency C-section, Kim's milk didn't come in for three weeks and she was forced to supplement with formula. "I was completely crushed," says Kim, a Boston native living in China. Fortunately,

her husband came to her aid, renting her a hospital-grade breast pump, finding her a lactation consultant and offering words of encouragement. With his help, Kim was able to start breastfeeding exclusively when Soren was 6 weeks old—and now, eight months later, "we're still going strong," she says. "I wanted to quit so badly at times, and without my husband's support, I probably would have."

Many first-time moms expect breastfeeding to come naturally—and for some, it does. But for others...well, it's a little more complicated. From positioning the baby to getting the proper latch, there can be a lot to figure out—and not all mothers and newborns get it right from the get-go, sometimes leading to problems like sore nipples and low milk production. Heading back to work early and introducing bottles too soon can interfere with the process, too. And let's face it: Around-the-clock nursing sessions can be exhausting for any new mom. Given those facts, it's no wonder so many women give up after just a few weeks or months despite recommendations to stick with it for a year.

But that could be different, experts say, if more new dads learned about breastfeeding and did what they could to help out. "Studies show that mothers with helpful and supportive partners are more likely to be successful breastfeeding," notes Wendy Fery, RN, IBCLC, an inpatient lactation consultant at Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside in Portland, Ore.

While breastfeeding *can* be challenging at first, it usually gets much easier once Mom and baby learn the ropes. Meanwhile, there are many incredible reasons to give it a shot, says Ruth A. Lawrence, MD, medical director of the Breastfeeding and Human Lactation Study Center at the University of Rochester in New York. Breast milk is brimming with nutrients that are crucial for a baby's brain development as well as antibodies that can guard him against allergies, ear infections, di-

arrhea, pneumonia, bacterial meningitis, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and other diseases. Nursing moms get big health perks, too, including a lower risk for breast and ovarian cancers, and possibly osteoporosis, later in life. Since breastfeeding burns calories like crazy and shrinks the uterus, it also can help new mothers get their prepregnancy figures back faster. The longer a woman continues to breastfeed, the greater the benefits—although any amount of nursing is certainly better than none.

### How dads can make a difference

➤ MANY NEW FATHERS assume that breastfeeding is Mom's department and leave it to her, but there are many ways that dads can get involved and be instrumental to making it work, says Terriann Shell, IBCLC, an international board-certified lactation consultant in Big Lake, Alaska. The perfect first step? Attending childbirth or breastfeeding classes with the mom, or reading up on the topic, before the baby is born. By learning all about the benefits and proper technique of breastfeeding, Dad will understand why his assistance is so important and be better prepared to pitch in.

In the week or so following the birth, when Mom is just getting the hang of breastfeeding, she may need a hand positioning the baby and getting him latched onto her breast—which is where an informed dad can be a huge help. "In the beginning, it's almost like a two-person process," says Fery. Holding the baby's hands

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, and then continued nursing until his first birthday or beyond.

### Dad power!

Twenty-five percent of new mothers whose significant others were educated about breastfeeding—including how to prevent and manage the most common lactation problems—were nursing exclusively after six months, versus only 15 percent of those whose partners received no special training, according to a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*.



PAGE 40: GETTY IMAGES/© LISA SPINDLER PHOTOGRAPHY INC.; PAGE 41: MASTERFILE; THIS PAGE: MASTERFILE

### Making the Case for Breastfeeding

SIX THINGS TO TELL A DAD WHO QUESTIONS WHETHER THE BREAST IS BEST:

#### Our baby will be healthier!

He'll not only have fewer colds now, but a reduced risk of many serious diseases down the line. (And fewer illnesses equals fewer doctor bills!)

#### It's cheaper!

Even if we buy or rent a breast pump and bottles, breastfeeding could save the family thousands of dollars.

#### More sleep for YOU!

Unless, of course, you want to get up to help with middle-of-the-night feedings and diaper changes.

#### No last-minute dashes to the store for formula!

Or having to warm it up and scrub bottles, for that matter.

#### No putrid poops!

Okay, it never smells good, but breastfed babies' poop is considerably less stinky.

#### The "perfect food" is easy to digest!

Which means fewer run-ins with constipation, gas or diarrhea.

as she latches on, watching to see that the baby latches well onto the areola (the dark part surrounding the nipple) with her mouth and providing pillows to prop up Mom's arms are just some of the things that a woman's partner can do to be a team player.

To maintain her milk supply and her own health, a nursing mom must eat well, stay hydrated and get enough z's—easier said than done when nursing a newborn every two to three hours. To help, her partner could make it his mission

to look after her needs—for example, by bringing her a plate of healthy finger foods or a fresh fruit smoothie while she's nursing, or being "on duty" (answering phone calls or listening for the baby's cry) as she tries to nap. Likewise, taking over tasks such as grocery shopping and laundry or even cleaning her breast pump could help lighten her load and allow her to get some badly needed rest.

In the early stages of breastfeeding, it's normal for a woman to feel uncertain of herself, > CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



### go wireless

Far from matronly, the **Elle Macpherson Intimates Momamia Wireless Lace Trimmed Nursing Bra** keeps you comfortably in place with sassy striped nylon spandex. **34C-38DD. \$58 at [apeainthepod.com](http://apeainthepod.com)**

### master plan

Medela's **Pump In Style Advanced** double electric pump mimics baby nursing to produce more milk faster (**\$280** for the kit), while the **Breastmilk Labeling and Storage System** (**\$16**) lets you track milk for freshness. Save space: Pump into **Pump & Save Breastmilk Bags** (**\$9/20-pack**).

[medelabreastfeedingus.com](http://medelabreastfeedingus.com)



### pump like a pro

Want hospital-grade pumping strength? The new **Ameda Purely Yours Ultra** brings it home. Speed and suction controls let you pick from 32 combinations the exact setting you need to get the most milk. Power it with its AC adaptor, car charger or 6 AA batteries. **\$300 at [ameda.com](http://ameda.com)**



### travel light

When you're on the move, a compact battery-operated pump handles the job like a pro without weighing down your handbag. **Evenflo's SimplyGo Electric Breast Pump** is a single pump made just for this purpose. A 5-ounce storage container and carrying case come with it. No need for an electrical outlet—just three AA batteries will have you pumping in no time. **\$45 at [evenflo.com](http://evenflo.com)**

# To Go With the Flow

By Maureen Healy

The best pumps and comfortable nursing bras can help make breastfeeding a breeze.

### value system

The budget-friendly **Lansinoh Affinity** doesn't skimp on quality or convenience. Use it with the included AC adaptor or with six AA batteries. Eight suction settings and six speeds let you customize each pumping session, and the Affinity won't let milk back up into the tubing ducts. **\$150 at [lansinoh.com](http://lansinoh.com)**



### hand power

For short outings away from baby, a manual pump may be all you need. The **Philips Avent Manual Breast Pump** has been a new-mom staple for years. Silent and compact, its patented massaging petals encourage letdown quickly. **\$40 at [philips.us/avent](http://philips.us/avent)**



### double duty

Save time—pump both sides at once with the **Simplisse Double Electric Breastfeeding Companion**. Two cups work in tandem to aid letdown and simulate suckling. A tote, a cooler and an instructional DVD are included. **\$299 to \$339 at [simplisse.com](http://simplisse.com)**



I will have RRD remove the orange from the dropshadow on Simplisse and make a path to overlap the Lansinoh Affinity over the rule.



» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43 overwhelmed or down in the dumps—in which case, a little encouragement from her BFF could go a long way, notes Fery. “Reminding her that she’s doing a great job and doing a wonderful thing for the baby could help a lot,” she explains. A mom’s emotional state can strongly affect her letdown reflex and ability to produce milk, adds Sally Wendkos Olds, coauthor of *The Complete Book of Breastfeeding*. So his expressions of love, appreciation and confidence may do more than lift her spirits; they could make breastfeeding go more smoothly as well.

Assuming the role of “non-nutritive cuddler”—being the one to hold and comfort the baby between feedings—is another way that a woman’s partner can get in on the act and make her life a little easier, adds Lawrence. “If the nursing mother picks up the baby, the baby may smell her milk and want to nurse when she doesn’t really need to, then end up spitting it back up,” Lawrence explains. Because Dad isn’t associated with food, he actually may have more luck calming the baby. What’s more, it would allow him to feel close to his child and be actively involved in her care.

Acting as the family’s breastfeeding advocate is also a great way for a significant other to be supportive. “Even today, when most people accept, or at least give lip service to, the benefits of breastfeeding, a woman may encounter discouragement from friends, relatives, neighbors, her employer or even complete strangers,” Wendkos Olds says. Dad can help by speaking to anyone who expresses disapproval or doubts the mother’s ability to nurse, explaining the benefits to others and protecting the mom from anyone who tries to interfere with it. “If he makes it plain that his partner is not to be discouraged from nursing, people will probably take his cue and keep any negative opinions to themselves,” Wendkos Olds says.

## When Dad disapproves

» DESPITE ALL THAT WE KNOW about breastfeeding’s incredible benefits, some new fathers aren’t so easily convinced. Some may not fully understand the value to both Mom and baby. Others may not like feeling excluded from feedings. Some who haven’t been exposed to breastfeed-

## Where to Get More Support

### La Leche League International (llli.org)

Head to the Web site to ask a question about breastfeeding, participate in an online chat, listen to a podcast or find a breastfeeding support group near you.

### The National Breastfeeding Helpline

(800-994-9662; womenshealth.gov)

Call anytime during business hours (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST) to talk with a trained peer counselor about your breastfeeding concerns.

### International Lactation Consultant Association (ilca.org)

Log on to find a board-certified lactation consultant in your area.

### NewParent.com

Get valuable breastfeeding info, including a step-by-step picture guide and make-it-work tips from experienced moms.

ing before may feel uncomfortable with it. Others may think that it’s more trouble than it’s worth, especially when problems arise. Still others may think of their partner’s breasts in a sexual way and refuse to share them with the baby.

If a woman’s partner is resistant to breastfeeding, the woman should find out his specific concerns and then address them one by one, advises Wendkos Olds. She should be sure he understands the advantages of nursing, not just for her, but also for the entire family (see “Making the Case for Breastfeeding,” page 43). “If he wants the best in life for his wife and his child, breastfeeding is something he really needs to consider,” Wendkos Olds says. Hopefully he’ll have a change of heart once he’s informed. If not, then it might help to have him talk to the baby’s pediatrician. But if it remains a stalemate and creates tension at home, then Mom will need to think long and hard about it. Ultimately, “the most important thing for the baby is the health of his parents’ relationship,” says pediatrician Jane Morton, MD, clinical professor of pediatrics at Stanford University and an executive member of the AAP Committee on Breastfeeding.

## A call to all dads

» AS THE SAYING GOES, it takes a village to raise a child—and that begins with breastfeeding, quite possibly “the most health-enhancing gift a baby can receive,” says Barbara Wilson-Clay, IBCLC, FILCA, a certified lactation consultant in Austin, Tex. “Breastfeeding *must* be viewed in a social context,” she explains. “Partners, grandparents, neighbors and health care providers all share responsibility for protecting the new mother as she learns to care for her infant.” So dads, it’s time to get on board, if you haven’t already. If possible, take a couple weeks off from work so you can be there to support your partner after the baby comes. When it comes to breastfeeding, your help and emotional support could be paramount to her success. ■

Having breastfeeding difficulties? Get support from other moms at [newparent.com](http://newparent.com).

Sun Valley, Idaho-based writer **Stacy Whitman** relied on her husband to care for their son (now age 6) while a doula and friends helped her successfully nurse her twins (now age 3).