

THE BABY ARRIVES: THE FAMILY & THE BREASTFED BABY

Carol Meredith
4/2020

Before your Baby Arrives

- Learn all you can from reputable sources, attend childbirth classes, contact the local La Leche League Leader.
- Attend an LLL meeting where babies are encouraged - in the past, most women saw breastfeeding around them, that exposure is not often available to mothers now.
- Identify your support person(s) - they need to be supportive of your choices, it may not be your mother or best friend.
- Ask for gifts that will make life easier after your baby comes – baby carrier, diapers, house cleaning, errands, frozen meals, etc.
- Ask for gifts that will make you feel good – clothes that make discreet breastfeeding easier, someone to watch the baby while you nap, take a shower.
- Visit the facility where you will give birth, ask questions, find out what procedures are routine & why they are necessary, some interventions may affect breastfeeding.
- Develop a birth plan - early in your pregnancy, decide what sort of childbirth you want & discuss with your health care professional so there are no surprises or decisions to make when you're in labor.

Childbirth

- Fewer interventions & drugs will make your baby more alert.
- Initiate breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth when baby is most alert.
- Ask for help from the lactation consultant, she will help you position your baby correctly & help you get comfortable.
- Ask that your baby receives nothing other than your milk, unless medically necessary.
- Keep your baby with you in your room as much as possible (rooming in).
- Ask that bathing & any tests or procedures done on your baby are done in your room.
- If you have a cesarean birth or your baby is born prematurely you can still breastfeed.

First Days at Home

- Hold your baby skin to skin – he needs to hear your heartbeat, feel your body, look into your eyes.
- Sleep when your baby sleeps – minimize disruptions.
- Keep things that you need within reach – phone, drink, wipes.
- Carry your baby in a front carrier (kangaroo-style) to keep him calm – but don't overdo it even if you feel good, you need to rest yourself.
- Sleep with your baby close to you - if you are a non-smoker, sober & unimpaired, a breastfeeding, & your baby is full term with no major health issues, is on his back when not nursing, is lightly dressed, & you are both on a safe surface, there is a reduced risk of SIDS or suffocation.
- Avoid pacifiers & supplementary bottles – they may cause nipple confusion.
- Some mothers feel depressed in the early weeks, share your honest feelings with your health care professional.

Returning to Work

- Delay returning to work as long as possible – helps your body recover fully, helps promote bonding between you, helps with establishing breastfeeding.
- Plan ahead – can you work part-time, take your baby with you to work, work from home, job share, return to work gradually working one or two days a week & increasing days?
- Is there a private place for pumping, is refrigeration available?
- Women Infants Children (WIC) Program provides breast pumps & other supplies.
- Research safe child care options – find one close to work, they need to respect your decision to breastfeed, can you visit during your work day, can he be brought to you?
- Try a "practice run" to identify challenges.

Your Support Team

- Seek out people who are supportive & understand breastfeeding.
- You are very vulnerable at this time; they can speak up for you.
- Have your support person accompany you on pre-natal visits.
- Support people need to cheer you on & protect you from others who are negative.
- They can watch out for you, reminding you to eat, take a nap, bring you fluids regularly & hold your baby while you take a shower.
- Your support person can keep track of visitor's time & tell them that they need to leave so you can take a nap.
- Your support person can limit time that visitors hold your baby (if that's your wish) to reduce infections.

For More Information

- La Leche League – non-profit organization that promotes breastfeeding, LLLI.org
- <https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info/birth-and-breastfeeding/>
- <https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info/sleep-bedshare/>
- <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/breastfeeding-priority-wic-program>