

# Breastfeeding: How your husband can help | Don't forget your support system

An action plan for your family and friends Choosing to breastfeed is one of the most important decisions you can make regarding your baby's health. It's a commitment that starts when your baby is born and can, ideally, continue for six months or more. Studies have found that women are more likely to start and continue breastfeeding if they receive positive encouragement from the people around them. You may need a support team. It can include anyone who's close to you: your partner, family, friends, and your health care provider. Many people in your life may want to support you during this exciting time, but not know the best way to help. Letting them know what you need (and when!) can help them to help you. Here are some tips to help rally your support team. Because every support team is unique, feel free to come up with some special ideas of your own. Learn together: Encourage the people on your support team to become informed about breastfeeding. The more they know, the more you can discuss the process together. Talk to each other: Communication is key. Talk about how you're feeling, and let the people around you know how they can help out. While the actual act of breastfeeding may happen just between you and your baby, your overall breastfeeding experience will be a more positive one if you are willing to let others help you. Support each other: Kindness, patience, and encouragement will go a long way no matter who is on your support team. You and the people around you should be proud of your decision to breastfeed. So remember to be a support for each other and to back each other up when talking to people about your decision to breastfeed. Support can also mean helping you stay healthy. Your partner can help you eat right and stay hydrated, as this will help your milk production. Get help with chores: Don't be afraid to ask your partner or people on your support team to help out with household chores, running errands, or preparing healthy meals so you can feed the baby or rest. If you have a partner, ask him or her to join you when you breastfeed: Breastfeeding can be a calm and relaxing time for you, your partner, and your baby to just be together and bond. There are lots of ways your partner can help out, even though you are the one doing the actual feeding. For example, when you and your baby are still learning how to breastfeed your partner can help you to read your baby's hunger and fullness cues. He or she could also change the baby's diaper before night-time feedings. And because it is so important to stay hydrated when you're breastfeeding, your partner can take on the job of bringing you a glass of water to drink while your baby is nursing. Nurture the baby: While babies get nutritional nourishment from your breastfeeding, emotional nourishment is important for your baby, too. Partners can cuddle, hug, play, and spend as much time as possible nourishing your baby's development. Finally, remember that your partner can be any trusted, reliable friend or family member who is eager to support your desire to breastfeed your baby for as long as possible.