



The Role of Family and Friends Support to the Breastfeeding Mother

For the mother

As a new mother, whether it is your first or fifth baby, you can always benefit from some extra help and support. If possible try to think about what type of support you may need before the birth of your baby. Some mothers may need more support with the day-to-day household chores while other mothers just like someone to talk to. Breastfeeding your baby is the best start for you and your baby. Even if you are an experienced mother, it can still take time to establish breastfeeding and to get to know your baby. Having extra help at this time can make establishing breastfeeding easier for you and your family. Below are some suggestions of the types of support which may benefit you. As you read the list, you may like to think about which of your family, friends or community support agencies would be the best suited for you should need it.

Physical Support

(May be needed if you have had a caesarean or instrumental delivery)

- Help with lifting heavy objects
- Help with other children
- Help with any breastfeeding problems

Practical Support

- Help with household tasks
- Help with shopping
- Help with older children
- Help so you can have extra time to yourself
- Help so you can have some time alone with your partner

Emotional Support

- Find support that is encouraging and positive
- Find support that you feel comfortable with
- Find out what supports are available in your area

For the helper

If you are a partner, friend or relative of a breastfeeding mother you can have an important role to play in supporting a mother and baby to enjoy and benefit from their experience. Included below are a few suggestions about the way this support can be provided:



- Provide emotional support
- Offer words of encouragement
- Respect the mother's judgement
- Respect the family privacy and space
- Do not place heavy demands on the mother. Allow her this time to breastfeed and rest.
- Provide practical help:
 - Help if mother wants help with household tasks such as cooking, cleaning and caring for other children
 - Offer drinks or snacks to the mother while feeding if possible
 - Encourage a positive, calm environment for breastfeeding e.g. comfortable room temperature, comfortable chair, footstool/pillows if preferred
 - Answer telephone or take phone off hook.
 - Perhaps mind the baby so the mother can have some time to herself to rest, sleep, take a bath, go for a walk, have some time to herself if she wants to spend some time with her partner or other children
 - Allow mother time to catch up on sleep
 - If you are actually assisting the mother to breastfeed, ensure you are in a comfortable position which then allows you to give the time it takes to help

Some Extra Hints

If someone offers to help, allow him or her to help you. Do not be tempted to look after them as a guest.