

A partner's role is essential to successful breastfeeding!

On the surface, it doesn't appear that a Father's or a Partner's role would carry too much weight in the breastfeeding department but the truth is, *a Partner's role can be essential to successful breastfeeding*. Detailed communication between the parents before the babies arrive and a commitment to give their babies the best start in life sets the stage for a successful breastfeeding experience for the whole family.

The following are some important hints and tips that will guide you in your breastfeeding support role:

- 1) Discuss in detail with your partner that you both want to give your babies this important start to their lives. Reinforce this decision whenever it is necessary, to other family members, friends and to each other.
- 2) Consider asking for extended parental leave from your job so that you can be available in the first few weeks after your babies are home. Even if your workplace doesn't offer extended leave, ask anyway. Explain why this extended leave would be an asset. Each time an employee asks for such extended leave, a seed is planted. Companies are often rethinking employee benefits and extended leave for parents with multiples might become automatic.
- 3) Bring your partner a nutritious snack and a glass of water each time she breastfeeds. Help to get her comfortable by putting pillows under her elbows, behind her back and a stool under her feet.
- 4) Actively involve yourself in the care of the babies. Don't wait to be asked. You may change diapers before breastfeeding and burp, cuddle and talk to a baby that finishes first so that Mom can focus on the other baby.
- 5) Take breastfeeding classes, ask questions and check out the vast array of books on breastfeeding. Learn about how to put babies to the breast, and about proper latching on so that you can assist your partner at those important first feedings. You will be a big support during those initial attempts at simultaneous breastfeeding.
- 6) With the birth of multiples, it isn't unusual for there to be a shift in the family roles, especially if the babies were delivered by c-section. This is major surgery and it takes at least six weeks for recovery. Dad/Partner may be called upon for different duties: grocery shopping, laundry and food preparation, for example.
- 7) As breastfeeding progresses and the milk supply is established, Mom can express breast milk so that you can feed one of your babies with a bottle, if this works for the both of you.
- 8) Breastfeeding is a learned art for both a mother and baby. Don't stay on the sidelines. Get involved; offer encouragement and problem-solving techniques to your partner, as they are needed.
- 9) It is important to remember to look after your relationship with your partner. Go for a walk or for a coffee and conversation. Arranging time together as a loving couple will help reinforce your togetherness and decision to breastfeed.
- 10) You may need to re-evaluate your feelings about your partner's breasts. While initially you may have thought of them with a view to sexuality, after a birth, things turn around as those same breasts become a source of nutrition for your babies. The initial weeks and months of life with new babies, breastfeeding and routines is intense, but this too shall pass. Many multiple birth parents do go on to have more children.
- 11) It isn't unusual for a father to feel jealous of the mother and babies' physical connection. Try not to feel rejected or displaced. You continue to be an important person and a leading role player both with your babies and with your partner.

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Father/Partners Support for Breastfeeding Multiples

- 12) If you feel that Mom is having difficulty with breastfeeding, encourage her to attend a La Leche League meeting or arrange for a consultation with a Lactation Consultant. Some of the latter make house calls and with a quick consultation, matters can soon be rectified. Also, check with your Multiple Births Canada Chapter for an experienced breastfeeding parent contact.
- 13) It isn't unusual for multiples to arrive early, i.e. before their due date. One of the amazing miracles of breast milk is that each mother's milk is specifically suited for her child's gestational needs. During the early days after your babies' births, you may need to provide encouragement and support as Mom pumps for your babies if they are unable to breastfeed independently.
- 14) Have faith in yourself and your capabilities. These are your children too and looking after yourself as well as your partner and babies, will help you all have a satisfying breastfeeding experience.

For more information about fathering, parenting, breastfeeding:

www.fathers.com
www.fathersforum.com

Documents and Articles

Multiple Births Canada Fact Sheets on various topics related to multiple pregnancy, births and parenting.

Additional Resources

Finding Our Way: Life with Triplets, Quadruplets and Quintuplets, Triplets, Quads & Quints Assoc., 2001

Mothering Multiples: Breastfeeding & Caring for Twins or More, Karen Kerkhoff Gromada, La Leche League Int'l, Revised Edition, 2007

When You're Expecting Twins, Triplets or Quads: Proven Guidelines for a Healthy Multiple Pregnancy, Barbara Luke and Tamara Eberlein, Third Edition, Harper Collins, 2011

The Joy of Twins and Other Multiple Births, Pamela Patrick Novotny, Crown Trade Paperbacks, Inc., 1994

Double Duty, Christina Baglivi Tinglof, Second edition, McGraw-Hill Books, 2009

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Recommended Sources of Information:

La Leche League of Canada Referral Service

www.lalecheleague.org

Lactation Consulting Services Canada

www.breastfeedinghelp.ca

MBC Breastfeeding Peer Support Network

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