

Out & About While Breastfeeding



Leaving the house with a breastfed baby is simple - you need take very little along except perhaps a nappy change and a drink for mum, as you will have milk on tap for all his needs. If you are delayed when out there is no need to worry about extra bottles: you can simply put your baby to your breast to suckle. However, it may be a good idea to wait until breastfeeding is established before venturing out, when you will be confident at latching on your baby. Pillows and other props will not be needed when you have learnt to support him close to your body.

Breastfeeding In Public

Many mothers visit a friend or somewhere that has a mother and baby room for their first outing, but breastfeeding does not mean that you have to keep yourself and your baby at home, or hidden away when you breastfeed. If you are breastfeeding in public you need not feel embarrassed – most breastfeeding women manage to feed very discreetly. You are just doing what is right for your baby.

The closeness between a mother and her breastfed infant helps form an incredible bond while offering the baby a sense of comfort and security. Breastmilk is easily digested and provides the essential nutrients, vitamins, proteins, fats and antibodies that your baby needs to develop physically and neurologically. In fact, studies have shown that breastmilk contains immunological agents that cannot be replicated by science. Research shows breastfeeding helps to protect your baby against allergies, reduces the rate of serious illness and makes him less likely to get sick.

Some mothers are uncertain about feeding their baby when out, particularly in the early days when both they and their baby are learning, but this should soon be overcome. Many mothers practice at home first, in front of a mirror, so they can see what others may see. It is good to learn to recognise your baby's feeding cues, so that you can prepare yourself and feel comfortable and ready for your baby to latch on before he is crying for attention from you, and attracting attention from others.

Breastfeeding discreetly in public can easily be done. If you wear the right clothes, you may well find that no-one even notices what you are doing.

It is a good idea to wear separates while breastfeeding, and either unbutton or pull the top up from the waist. As your baby will be covering your lower breast and nipple, you will not be revealing any breast at all. On cooler days, you could wear a strap top, without



the straps over the shoulders, under a loose T-shirt; this top can then be pulled down along with your bra, while the T shirt is pulled up, thus covering the midriff too. If it is cold a jacket or shawl is a useful cover up. Dedicated breastfeeding clothes with concealed holes and flaps are readily available.

If you wear a nursing bra you may find you prefer one that can be pulled up or unfastened and refastened with one hand. Larger breasted mothers say they find it more difficult not to expose any breast, but some suggest taking a bra with a good fit and cutting out a large piece to fit over the areola area (brown part of the breast near the nipple), then attaching on a flap from a nursing bra with velcro. This holds the breast tissue in check while feeding.

Some mothers use a baby carrier or sling that they can discreetly feed the baby in while moving around, or adopting different positions.

If you are uncomfortable about breastfeeding in public, you may feel more confident if you attach your baby, then read a magazine or newspaper. Sitting in a corner will give you the most privacy and, if you are with someone, you could ask them to ensure that you are not in full view of everyone.

Some mothers find that leaking is a problem when your baby is new. If your breasts begins to tingle as if they may leak, applying pressure on the nipple with your hand stems the flow, and absorbent breast pads can be helpful. You may prefer to wear patterned clothes at this time, as leaks show more on plain fabrics.



Breastfeeding Friendly Places

Some premises do, of course, provide designated rooms in which a mother can breastfeed in private. Sometimes, however, a hungry baby will not wait! And remember that no breastfeeding mother should be 'invited' to feed her baby in a toilet - adults and bottle fed babies aren't made to feed there.

The National Childbirth Trust (NCT), conducts a 'You CAN do it Here!' Campaign, which is designed to let women know where they will be welcome to breastfeed when out and about. Many NCT branches have local directories of breastfeeding friendly places, and in some areas local authorities and community health trusts have done this, too.

While there have been some highly publicised cases of women encountering problems when breastfeeding in public, it is important to be encouraged by the fact that a National Opinion Polls (NOP) survey on the attitude of the public towards breastfeeding suggested that 84% of adults do not have a problem with mothers breastfeeding their babies when out and about if done discreetly. You can find useful information on supporting breastfeeding women on the Breastfeeding Awareness section of the NCT website, as well as information for employers and Local Authorities on welcoming visitors who wish to breastfeed to their premises.

Mothers have satisfied their baby's needs by breastfeeding while away from home quickly and effectively for millennia. Little ones are easy to take out in a sling or pram and often just feed and sleep, happy knowing they are close to mum.

Breastfeeding and The Law

Most cultures in the world are used to seeing a mother breastfeed and view it as natural. It is again now becoming more normal in the UK and happily our governments are working on legislation to support breastfeeding.

Scotland

Under the Breastfeeding etc. (Scotland) Act 2005, it is an offence to prevent or stop a mother from feeding her child in a public place or licensed premises, so long as the child is lawfully allowed to be there. Under this Act, 'child' means anyone under two years of age. The offence carries a fine of up to £2,500. If a person does so while acting in the course of employment, then the employer is also deemed liable, whether or not the offence was carried out with the employer's knowledge or approval.



England

There is also a campaign gathering momentum in England to protect a mother's right to breastfeed her baby in a public place. The Government have issued a discussion paper designed to lead to a future bill to cover England, Wales and Scotland: The Single Equality Bill. The bill would, among other things, protect expectant and new mothers against discrimination beyond the protection afforded by employment rights. The plans would allow mothers of children up to one year old to feed their baby 'discreetly' in public, and would be likely to carry a similar fine of up to £2,500 for those preventing this.

Useful Organisations:

The Single Equality Bill www.communities.gov.uk

National Childbirth Trust www.nct.org.uk

La Leche League International www.llli.org

This information is available to download as a pdf from:

www.lansinoh.co.uk