Fathering Your Breastfed Baby

Welcome to the exciting, adventurous experience of fathering a breastfed baby. You may have mixed feelings about the breastfeeding experience, which may appear to belong only to mother and baby. Be assured that these feelings are normal.

Research shows that the time fathers spend with their babies will build self-esteem later in life. Although the balancing act may be difficult at times, the rewards are worth it. Here are some ways you can be father, comforter, helper, coach and provider of that extra special assurance only you know how to give to mother and baby.

• Hold your baby close to your chest every chance you get. Baby will hear your heart beat and feel that closeness the two of you can share.

• Holding your baby skin-to-skin helps growth and development by giving baby a sense of warmth and security from an early age.

• Babies like a gentle but firm touch. Touch is important to growth and development. Your baby will show pleasure if he or she likes a particular touch (or displeasure otherwise).

• Massage your baby’s neck or back. Rock your baby. Play with your baby (make faces and dance with baby).

• Babies love the sound of your voice. Talk, sing, read and recite nursery rhymes to your baby. This will promote bonding between you.

• Watch your baby. Babies communicate by smiling, eye contact and reaching out.

• The younger the baby, the shorter the attention span. Watch for overstimulation (babies may close their eyes or cry).

• Encourage mom, tell her she is doing a good job. Give positive strokes. Praise her for the special gift she alone can give your baby.

• Be a buffer for mom. Protect her from well-wishing friends and relatives who know little or nothing about breastfeeding.

• Take time off if you can to be there when mom and baby arrive home. Later, plan outings where the baby can come as well, such as movies, parks or out for a ride.

• If possible, plan time alone for you and mom if you can work it around feeding schedules.

• Help with the baby so that mom can take a nap in the afternoon. At night change the diaper and bring the baby to mom for feeding.

• If there are other children, spend special time with them. Include the other children in baby’s care. Ask them how they feel about this new little person. They need to know that they are still loved.