

Family and friends

– the breastfeeding cheerleaders

You must learn numerous new things when a baby is born – breastfeeding being one of them. Some mothers have researched it thoroughly during pregnancy, for others, breastfeeding can be a slightly surprising addition. All in all, most mothers want to breastfeed and they feel it is an important part of caring for the baby and they want to succeed at it. The mother's family and friends form the best support system for the mother in the joys and challenges of breastfeeding.

Encourage. Admire the baby, complement the mother. Encouraging is especially important if living with a new baby is hard at the beginning. Empower her to think that the obstacles can be overcome.

Touch. Hug the mom, rub her shoulders or feet. Touching gives her strength and stimulates the let-down reflex.

Give mom a rest. During the first weeks, cuddling skin to skin with the baby is the best possible care for the mother, the baby and breastfeeding. Let the mother sleep if she feels tired. Even if breastfeeding is difficult, don't tell the mother to not fuss over it, since it may sound you don't care about something important to her.

Nourish. A breastfeeding mom will be very happy with food, sandwiches or treats provided for her. A jug of water served without asking is an act of love.

Give time - alone or with the baby. A long hot shower may feel like a distant

dream to a new mother – let alone a nice evening stroll. Hold the baby between feedings, give him a bath, let the baby sleep in a sling. You can also entertain the bigger siblings or grab the vacuum cleaner. Ask what the mother wants.

Accept. It is completely normal to be immersed into being a mother for the baby. The mother becomes sensitive to the baby's cues. You may feel that the baby fills the mother's life, but underneath it all, she is still the same incredible woman.

Let the mother decide. Instincts and the baby guide the mother's choices in breastfeeding. She may very well know and feel something that you cannot. Therefore, it is important to let the mother make her own choices concerning breastfeeding. The loved ones are there to help the mother reach her goals.

Trust. First-time mothers are especially vulnerable to criticism. She needs to trust herself to care for the baby and that others believe in her too. It is not the time to overwhelm her with your ideas about caring for babies or bring up outdated guidelines. Parenthood is a journey where each experience is a step towards the next one. Trust the mother and her skills to care for the baby and be the mother she wants to be. Trust the baby, his instincts and abilities.

Listen. A good listener can be worth much more than ten well-meaning tips. There are times when a mother is so



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tired that she doesn't even know what she wants. The best way to help is to listen to her unload. Take time and listen to what the mother wants and needs. A new mother is often very accommodating and does not have the strength to stand up for herself.

Find out. The guidelines of baby care are constantly updated and reformed. Guidelines from ten years ago have been replaced several times. The current recommendations and plenty of up-to-date breastfeeding information can be found at www.imety.fi 📌

