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7 Nursing Tips from Moms Who've Been There

Breastfeeding your baby can be no easy task. Sometimes you just need advice from women who've been through it. Here's our round-up of nursing tips from real moms.

BY DOROTHY SASSO





VAL SHEVCHENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK

tips I got.

Have no expectations

Women are told that **breastfeeding** is the most natural thing in the world—breast is best! But no one mentions the emotional drain, **flat nipples**, over supply, **clogged milk ducts** or any of the other nursing issues you hear about. Breastfeeding—especially in the early days—can be tough. My now 9-month-old daughter nursed on demand for the first four months and the demand was frequent. Much as I loved nursing, I was exhausted and it was taking a toll on me.

One of the best things I did was join a lactation support group. It gave me perspective (turns out that there were way worse issues than a blister on one nipple) and got me through the first three months of nursing. I learned a lot from other moms—some from the group, some who had been in my life for years. Here are some of the best

"Much like the labor and delivery experience, you never know what you're going to get. Between lip ties, tongue ties, supply issues, physical challenges and sometimes just realizing it is incredibly hard, **don't assume it's going to just work**," says Charlene A. from Philadelphia, whose daughter just turned 8 months. "It is the biggest commitment you can make to your little one and it is a beautiful thing, but it is also a sacrifice of your body and time."

Renee A. from New York had to realize that breastfeeding was a journey and to be successful, she had to **remain flexible**. "I set short term goals for how long I would nurse," she says, "and then found after a while the decision to continue became easier." She nursed her now two-year-old for over a year.

Stay entertained

"Breastfeeding and pumping is a lonely, boring time. You can't move around and do things, and since mine usually falls asleep during it, it also has to be a quiet time," says Sara S. from New York City, who is still nursing her 15-month-old daughter. "So instead of it being the productive time I thought I'd make it, **feeding time has become great for mindless activities**, a rare chance to turn my brain off." Sometimes this meant surfing her phone, looking for a house or compiling baby photos into an album, and even reading studies about the [advantages of breastfeeding](#). "I needed an occasional reminder of why I was doing this," she explains.

Melanie T. of Kintnersville, Pa., whose son is 5 months, did a lot of **Pinterest** searching while breastfeeding. "I found lots of helpful guides for new mommies on feeding, sleep patterns and what to expect in the first few months," she says.

Renee says she was paranoid about falling asleep while nursing and putting Baby at risk, "so I began watching some **guilty pleasure TV and catching up with friends** to keep me stimulated when I was exhausted."

Work with what ya got

Charlene found out flat nipples were a thing when she had to use a **nipple shield** to nurse her daughter. "Having to use a nipple shield to build a breastfeeding relationship has been the most difficult challenge thus far," she says. But for Melanie, the shield was a welcome tool for moms like her who experience difficulty breastfeeding due to **latching issues**. "It's a way to slow down and help your baby to breastfeed without becoming frustrated or potentially giving up," she says.

Keep calm and carry on

Sara M. from Philadelphia struggled with clogged ducts and mastitis while nursing her 9-month-old son. "This might sound hokey but **patience and staying calm** helped tremendously when I experienced a clogged duct," she says. "Time is not your friend in this situation and adding more stress and anxiety only makes it worse." She now takes soy lecithin to aid in emulsifying the fats in my milk (speak to your doctor for the right dosage for you), while warm Epsom salt baths and massage sometimes act as a quick-fix." Last but not least," she adds, "I have changed nursing positions or used gravity to hand-express in a table-top position during very challenging periods."

Take care of yourself

"I had no idea how physically draining or time-consuming breastfeeding would be, especially in the early months," Sara M. shares. "I learned very quickly to drink lots of water and **energy-rich foods**."

Melanie echoes this: "**Drink a lot of water!** A lot! I learned this the hard way. I also drank a lactation tea daily and I thought that helped. And it tasted good too."

Sara S. learned very quickly that with her and husband working full-time, there wasn't much room for "**me time**." "After a minor meltdown, my husband and I now take turns taking care of ourselves," she says. "He can meet his friend at the bar one day, if I can have an hour to go shopping the next. Time like this, while seemingly minor, is imperative—for our relationship, and our sanity."

Find support

"In a time when all I wanted to do was stop nursing, and cry, there was a room full of women [at my **lactation support group**] who had similar feelings," Charlene says. "So much information was shared regarding clogged ducts, mastitis, marathon feedings, pacifying verses feeding with purpose, feeling the need to cry, etc. Having that support was fantastic at a time when I really needed it."

Lesley P. from Yardley, Pa. also relied on her mom friends, since the birth of her now 17-month-old. "**My friends and I started a group text** string since we had babies all around the same age and we use each other as a sounding board," she says. "It provided the support we all needed but also lots of great tips and advice were exchanged. It got us all through some tough times and we are so happy to have each other to share in the successes."

Renee leaned on her hubby. "After my baby was old enough and was gaining enough weight to physically sleep through the night, **my husband became the first line of defense** when our newborn would wake up in the wee hours," she says. "He helped rule out every other option of what could be wrong—dirty diaper, sick, too hot/cold, baby just wanted comfort—before he would wake me up to nurse."

Lose the guilt

"When it was time to wean, I was surprised how sad I was that this part of our relationship was coming to an end so **enjoy the experience** as much as possible," Renee says. "Any amount of time that you can nurse—two days, two weeks or two years—benefits your child so don't be hard on yourself if you cannot nurse long term. Respect yourself and your body and when possible try to reflect on how empowering it is that you are the prime source of nutrition from when your child was just an egg through whenever you finish breastfeeding. Your body can do amazing things!"

Charlene recommends setting very small goals along the way—from one month to the next—and assess if it's working for you. "Realize that **everyone's journey is different** and don't ever feel guilty about what works for you and your child," she says. "Leave all the Judgy McJudgins out of your life—there isn't enough room for milk and madness at the same time."

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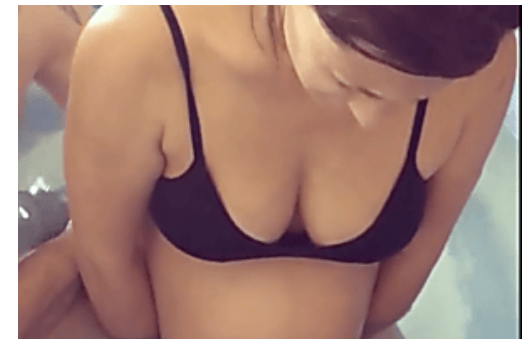


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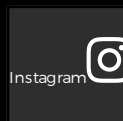
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