

# Where to Find Breastfeeding Help

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It used to be that when a woman gave birth, she was surrounded by women who could answer her questions, calm her fears, and advise her on what to do when it came to breastfeeding. Even though this is now rarely the case, information and help are always available when and if you need it.

When I gave birth to my first son, I planned to nurse him. Unfortunately, he was a month early and came after a day and a half of gentle, then not-so-gentle inducement. He was taken to the NICU, and I was taken to a room, clutching a Polaroid picture of my new baby. Shortly thereafter, an overworked nurse arrived in my room with a piece of machinery on a wheeled cart, confirmed I planned to nurse, showed me where the buttons were, and left. Seriously. That was my introduction to nursing.

Fortunately, my story had a happy ending. One of my sisters-in-law is a post-natal nurse, and she saved me from total despair. She has three sons of her own (all nursed), and was an expert baby wrangler. When I told her that I had no idea how to feed my newborn (despite, may I add, reading every book I was able to get my hands on during my pregnancy). Up until then, it was just theory to me. She said that she could show me, but that she'd have to touch my breasts to do it. You know, at that point, she could have hauled in the janitor to show me, and I wouldn't have cared. With a little work, some adjustments, some words of encouragement, and some reassurance about preemies, my son and I were off to a good start.

A happy ending? Well, not quite. We went through poor latch on, problems with low appetite (his and mine), poor suck, poor latch on, my return to work, biting, and the normal stresses every new mother faces. My mother hadn't had success with nursing either my brother or me, so I couldn't turn to her. My mother-in-law, who nursed eight children, lived six hours away. I had no friends or neighbors with nursing experience. And I was too shy to ask my sister-in-law for help.

I can't quite remember who called whom, but I finally did get in touch with a local mom-to-mom organization called Nursing Mothers. I talked with a counselor over the phone, she sent me a bunch of fact sheets about various aspects of nursing, I went to meetings with other moms, and I eventually became a counselor myself.

So my experience with my older son had a happy ending. He's now a healthy, happy 13-year-old who's nearly as tall as I am – quite a change from that wizened little 5-pound baby.

My experience with my second son was like night and day. He was what I'd describe as an enthusiastic nurser. Everything went smooth as silk until it was time to wean. I had to

resort to dressing in my closet so that he didn't see even a hint of bra or skin, which would set up demands for "nack" (snack).

Remember I said that I became a Nursing Mothers counselor? Well, you'd think that would mean that I was a savvy nursing mother in all respects. So, guess who ended up with mastitis in one breast and didn't figure it out for a couple days? And who wound up screaming at the start of each nursing session because the baby wasn't latching on correctly, which led to cracked, bleeding nipples? Yeah, that would be me.

In both cases I was able to turn to people or books for information and help. So I was lucky. I'm also stubborn and pigheaded, which made giving up not an option.

This is all a very long lead in to the main part of this article: where to turn for information, advice, and reassurance about nursing. If there's one thing that's available in abundance, it's information. The key is to line up your sources BEFORE you need them. When you're tired, frightened, or frustrated, it's not going to help if you have to dig around for what you need.

So, in the spirit of being prepared, here's a list of potential sources for help, should you need it during any stage of your nursing experience. Please: if you need help, ASK. There IS help out there ... all you need to do is reach out for it.

- Your ob/gyn or midwife
- Your pediatrician or family physician
- Your local hospital or birth center
- Certified lactation consultants
- Local nursing organizations, like La Leche League
- Moms' clubs
- Parenting organizations
- Your house of worship
- Friends or relatives who've nursed
- Your local library or bookstore
- The Internet

Most of this help is available free; some is available for a fee (but check with your insurance company to see if it will cover, for example, consultation with a certified lactation consultant). And if you ask and can't find help there, then ask if they can refer you to someone who can help you.

Even people like me, who you've never met but who have nursed, are often willing to lend you the support you need. When it comes to needing nursing help, you're never really alone.

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<http://www.typeamom.net/where-to-find-breastfeeding-help.html>