



ILCA's INSIDE TRACK

a resource for breastfeeding mothers

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What Grandparents Can Do to Support a Breastfeeding Mother

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Congratulations! Your daughter or daughter-in-law just had a baby. And she says she wants to breastfeed her baby and not give any formula at all. You've just been given a wonderful opportunity to support her. You may have some concerns. Formula feeding may have seemed to work well for you and your own children. Today, we know more about the importance of breastfeeding for mothers and babies. With a little help from you, your daughter and grandchild can have a better breastfeeding experience.

Importance of Family Support

You were a new parent once. You had fears and concerns about doing what was right for your baby. Your child is probably just like you. She needs your support now more than ever. Close family and friends play an important role in a mother's infant feeding decisions.

If a mother feels supported—

- She will be more confident.
- She will breastfeed longer.

If a mother doesn't feel supported—

- She will feel overwhelmed with her new responsibilities.
- She is more likely to quit breastfeeding early.

Why Exclusive Breastfeeding?

You want to do what is best for your new grandchild. You might wonder why breastfeeding is important. In the 1960s and 70s, breastfeeding was not common in many parts of the world. Many doctors and families believed that formula was better than breast milk. They were told that formula had "everything that babies need." Now

we know that breast milk is perfectly designed to be a baby's only food. Breast milk contains all the nutrients babies need to grow, and antibodies and other immune factors that help a baby stay healthy. Babies who are exclusively breastfed stay healthier than babies who are given both formula and breast milk. Doctors recommend that babies be exclusively breastfed for 6 months. For the next 6 months, doctors recommend that babies be breastfed and given other foods. So babies should be breastfed for at least 12 months.

What You Can Do as a Grandparent

If a grandmother breastfed her children, her daughters are more likely to breastfeed. But if you did not breastfeed your children, not to worry. There are still many things that you can do to help make breastfeeding a success for your daughter and grandchild:

- Look for ways to help the breastfeeding mother with household chores or other tasks, so that she will be free to breastfeed her baby.

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- Respect your daughter's infant feeding choices. Be sure to check with your daughter before you feed your grandchild anything.
- Breastfed babies may eat and sleep differently than formula-fed babies. Don't expect your grandchild to behave the same way that your babies did.
- If you have any concerns about how your grandchild is being fed, don't rush to tell your daughter what she is doing wrong. Get more information. A lactation consultant or pediatrician can tell you how to know if the baby is getting enough milk, or is gaining enough weight, and so on. They can help you help your daughter.

Remember—

Your grandchild has only one start in life, and you can help make it the best start possible.

Your Local Lactation Consultant

More Ways to Help a Breastfeeding Mother

- Listen to the breastfeeding mother. It is tempting to want to offer advice, but sometimes simply listening can be the best help you can give.
- Keep in mind that new parents can be sensitive to the things that are said to them. The way you say something can be just as important as what you say.
- Encourage your daughter if the going gets tough. Remind her of the things that she is doing right for her baby.
- Breastfeeding is a learned skill. If the mother and baby are having difficulty with breastfeeding, kindly suggest that the mother contact a lactation consultant.

Did
You
Know?

Only breast milk contains...

- all of the nutrients that growing babies need.
- immune factors that work together to help a baby stay healthy and boost his immune system.
- enzymes to help a baby digest mother's milk.
- growth factors and hormones that help a baby develop and grow strong.
- specific antibodies against germs that a mother has been exposed to so a baby is protected from them.