

Breastfeeding in Public

Try these tips to get started



Exercise Your Right

It is your legal right to breastfeed in public, anyplace where you and your baby are allowed to be.

Many new mothers have questions about how to breastfeed discreetly in public. Here are a few suggestions that may be helpful. Try several things, and see what works best for you:

Wear appropriate clothing that will make it easier to feed your baby without exposing your breast. Examples include:

- A nursing bra that can be pulled up or pushed aside, or fastened and unfastened with one hand
- A loose-fitting shirt that can be lifted up or unbuttoned from the bottom
- A jacket, blouse, or sweater layered over another shirt, to help cover your side
- A nursing shirt or dress designed with hidden slits and panels to provide easy access to your breasts while keeping them covered

Use a cover, if you prefer. For example use:

- A fabric sling that supports and covers your baby and your breast
- A blanket or shawl that can be draped over your baby and your chest after the baby is latched on

- A cape specifically designed to cover you and your baby while still allowing you to view the baby

Practice first

- At home, expose your breast as you and your baby are learning to latch-on and feed. As you become more comfortable and feeding becomes easier, try doing it without exposing as much of the breast.
- If you are facing someone, try turning to the side during latch-on, so that your breast will be out of view. Then pull your clothing around the breast, and turn back toward the front.
- Practice your technique in front of a family member or friend, or in front of a mirror, before trying it in public for the first time.
- Attend a breastfeeding support group meeting so that you can practice in a breastfeeding-friendly environment and get help from other mothers.

Find a good location to breastfeed. As you become more comfortable breastfeeding in public, you may be able to breastfeed in almost any environment.



www.ncbfc.org

However, as you are getting started, some of the following locations might be good places to try:

- A women's lounge in a department store
- A breastfeeding room near a family restroom in a mall or airport
- A dressing room in department store or maternity store
- A bench or seat in a quiet area of a park, museum, or mall
- A booth in a restaurant

Try to plan the feedings

- Sit down to feed your baby at the first sign of hunger, rather than waiting for the baby to cry. Crying will draw more attention to you and your baby, and it may make discreet breastfeeding more difficult. However, if your baby is already crying, don't worry – just feed the baby. The people around you would most likely prefer to see a quiet breastfeeding baby than a crying baby!
- As your baby gets older, he or she will go longer between feedings, so you may be able to plan your outings around feeding times.
- Some mothers like to feed their babies in the car when they get to their destination. This makes it less likely that the baby will need to eat before it is time to go back to the car.
- Some mothers prefer to give their babies expressed breast milk in a bottle when they are out in public. This requires a bit more pre-planning.

Breastfeeding discreetly will become easier with time and practice. As you are breastfeeding confidently in public, look at your surroundings and make eye contact with people. Many people will not even realize that you are breastfeeding. Those people who do realize it and are supportive may smile at you to express their encouragement. Those who are uncomfortable with it may look away or try to stop you from doing it. But remember that breastfeeding is the healthiest way to nourish your baby, and it is your legal right to breastfeed in public anyplace where you and your baby are allowed to be (N.C. Gen. Stat. sec. 14-190.9).

By breastfeeding in public, you will show people in your community that breastfeeding is the normal, healthy way to feed a baby. As more people see mothers breastfeeding their babies in the community, breastfeeding will be viewed as the normal way to feed our babies. As a breastfeeding mother, you are serving as a role model and helping to bring about that change!