

New Food Choices Support Breastfeeding

Providing breastfeeding support: tips for getting started

You don't have to be a "breastfeeding expert" to provide breastfeeding support.

If breastfeeding is new to you, the thought of providing breastfeeding support or doing a Breastfeeding Review may seem overwhelming. Breastfeeding is a *learned* behavior. *Everyone* is a beginner when it comes to breastfeeding. Below are suggestions to help you increase your confidence in your ability to support breastfeeding moms.

1. Observe your coworkers who have more skill and experience. If you are helping a mom and her problems are bigger than what you are comfortable with, don't be afraid to ask for help.
2. After you help a mom, debrief with your clinic's breastfeeding expert to evaluate what occurred and to learn ways to help moms the next time a similar situation comes up.
3. After helping a mom, ask your client if it is OK to have your clinic's breastfeeding expert come in and listen as you review the keys points of your intervention with the mom. Ask your breastfeeding expert if she is available. Have the breastfeeding expert provide any information you may have missed. This is a great way to learn!
4. Review your clinic's resources and read (or re-read) your client education handouts so that you are familiar with breastfeeding information and can refer to a needed handout quickly.
5. Practice makes perfect. It is OK to admit to your client that you are new to helping women breastfeed. Your offer of help and letting her know that you care about her concerns is very affirming and reassuring.
6. Remember, if you have spent any time studying latch, you know more about latch than almost every doctor and most hospital nurses.
7. If you can't help her, you can refer her to someone else who can. No matter what happens, she will probably leave your office feeling better because you have heard her concerns, answered some of her questions and given her information that she finds helpful. You probably know more about breastfeeding than any other person in her world! Give yourself some credit for that!
8. In a WIC clinic, when helping a woman breastfeed, it is important to ask permission before you touch her breasts or her baby. "May I touch you?" and "May I touch your baby?" is usually fine.
9. Women with engorgement, sore nipples and/or breast pain are usually very willing to let you examine their breasts. They want help to relieve their pain and help them to continue to breastfeed.
10. To make this process easier ask permission:

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- “Do you want me to help latch your baby? It may be easier if we work together.”
- “May I see your nipples? It is easier for me to tell what is going on if I can see where you are sore.”
- “May I touch you? If I can help you get baby on the breast correctly it will be easier to see if we can reduce your pain.”
- If you are uncomfortable with touching a woman, you can show her using the breast model and a baby.

Most moms who come to WIC for formula don't really want formula- they just don't know what else to ask for!

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