The Role of the Father in Breastfeeding

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CNM, IBCLC

A father’s love is something a child holds on to for a lifetime. unknown
Objectives

► Discuss the value of men in obstetric care
► Advocate for recognition of fathers as equal partners in the breastfeeding and parenting relationships
► Identify effective teaching strategies to prepare fathers for their role as breastfeeding coaches

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Disclaimer

► Every infant requires as many loving and supportive adult caregivers as possible, and that the gender and biological relationship is less important that the love that these adults can offer the child.

► Breastfeeding support personnel need to be prepared to address the concerns of all parents.

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Why “Father”

More than 80% of births in America

- 64% Married
- 24% “Cohabitating, not married”
  - Martinez (CDC 2015)

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What is a FATHER?

► Moral Compass
► Teacher
► Disciplinarian
► Breadwinner
► Advocate
► Coach
  ▪ From labor coach to breastfeeding coach

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Risks of NOT having a Father

► Absentee Fatherhood is associated with:
  - Poor infant weight gain for preterm infants
  - Poor language skills
  - Lower cognitive skills
  - Decreased academic achievement
  - Impaired social and adaptive behavior
  - Increased behavioral problems
  - Increased juvenile delinquent behavior and Adult Incarceration
  - Higher likelihood of child neglect
  - Increased External Locas of Control
  - Decreased empathy and social competence
Benefits of the Paternal Support in Breastfeeding

► #1 Source of Support

► Source of Breastfeeding Help
  - Rated just behind Nurses and IBCLCs as most helpful in the immediate post partum.
    - RN=2.5, IBCLC=2.4, Dad =2.3

► Enhances continuation
  - Only the Baby is more helpful!
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Fathers increase initiation

► Trained Successful breastfeeding fathers to provide peer support to new & prospective fathers
  ▪ Breastfeeding physiology and immunology
  ▪ Basic counseling techniques

► Increased initiation rate from 71-76% to 83% in three months (Stremler and Lovera, 2004)

► A 2-hour class on breastfeeding promotion increased initiation from 41% to 74% (Wolfberg et. al. 2004).

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Pisacane et al. 2005

- An RCT on paternal support and breastfeeding success
- N=140 each group (trained and untrained)
- Two 40-minute sessions
- Findings:
  - Increased Duration at 6 months
  - Decreased interruption of breastfeeding due to complications
  - Increased relevant help from fathers

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# Pisacane Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trained</th>
<th>Untrained</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Breastfeeding at 6 months:</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Breastfeeding at 12 months:</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Inadequate Milk Supply:</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding Problems:</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding interruptions due to problems:</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant help from dads:</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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</table>

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What do we have so far?

► Well educated dads can
  ▪ Increase initiation rates
  ▪ Increase success rates
  ▪ Solve problems at home (we aren’t there at 3AM)
  ▪ Decrease the perception of inadequate milk supply

► Is there a down side to this!?!
What do dads think?

► In a study of 289 “critical incidents” reported by fathers in the immediate post partum

► 80% of fathers reported negative experiences with nurses or felt they were ignored by nurses
  ▪ “I wasn’t excluded by nurses, they didn’t ask me to leave the room, but it was non-verbal exclusion by the way their body was... they never asked me how I felt as a dad.”

► The Majority of fathers had more negative experiences than positive (58.8%)
What do dad’s want?

► Many nurses feel that fathers are uncomfortable or uninterested in breastfeeding
► Fathers overwhelmingly expressed motivation to be involved, and to be noticed for this by the health care staff
► Fathers deplored not being addressed by nurses.
  ▪ “Just the husband”

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How do dad’s see breastfeeding?

► 63% of fathers felt that nurses didn’t give dad enough information

► 28.9% of the negative incidents regarded breastfeeding

  ▪ “Breastfeeding was what I found most difficult. I didn’t know how to help, I felt useless.”

  ▪ “It is hard to become totally involved when you can’t feed him, and this, apart from sleeping, is what he is predominantly doing”

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Interviewed 21 BF fathers

- Teamwork (used sports analogies)
- Valued and used prenatal education
  - Breastfeeding savvy
- Valued the BF Mother
- Facilitated breastfeeding

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Jealousy?

- Equated getting food with a feeling of closeness and safety
- Bonding “in the feeding zone”
  - Took part in feeding activity (burping, cuddling)
- Fatherly nurturing behavior
  - Playing, singing, bathing, bedtime rituals

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Let’s talk a little about beauty

- Pregnant women and mothers are beautiful
  - They are also superhuman
- We can encourage fathers to say the same things

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Father Friendly BF Education

- Evening or weekend hours
- Emphasis on the paternal perspective of breastfeeding and parenting
- “Triad focused” to emphasize the role of all three key players (mother, father, infant)
- Discussion on the value of breastfeeding
  - Pros and cons, monetary costs, health of the infant
- Demonstrations of tangible and realistic tools
  - Positioning, latching, troubleshooting
- Measurable signs of successful breastfeeding
  - Signs of milk transfer, signs of satisfaction, expected weight gain
- Honest and realistic information regarding breastfeeding issues
  - Working baby into the family, breastfeeding in public, and the effects of a newborn on intimacy

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24-Hour Crib-side Assistance

https://newdadmanual.wordpress.com/2016/11/05/welcome/

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**We're Prepared!**

Learn best practices. Decide what you want. Tell your care team your wishes. Being prepared helps you and your new baby have a great hospital stay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>My Hospital Offers</th>
<th>I'm Prepared &amp; Want</th>
<th>I Received</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>Labor Begin on its own</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfort During Labor</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>Fall In Love</td>
<td>Skin To Skin Right After Birth</td>
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<td>Delayed Routine Procedures</td>
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<td>Magical First Hour Without Interruptions</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Help With Baby’s First Feed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nourish</td>
<td>Help Learning How to Breastfeed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help Learning How to Feed Express Milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep Baby Close</td>
<td>Keep My Baby In The Room With Me</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continued Skin to Skin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>My Quiet Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn Your Baby</td>
<td>Feed My Baby on Demand</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comforting My Baby</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect</td>
<td>No Pacifiers or Blankets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Formula (Unless Medically Necessary)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**HOSPITAL STAFF:** Please fill in Mother and Baby’s info below and fax this form to WIC. ✔️

- **Baby’s Name:**
- **Baby’s Birth:**
- **Mother’s Name:**
- **Mother’s Birth:**
- **Mother’s Weight:**
- **Mother’s Height:**
- **Mother’s Stature:**
- **Mother’s Blood Type:**
- **Mother’s Protein:**
- **Mother’s Allergies:**
- **Mother’s Medications:**
- **Mother’s Other:**

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"Breast For Success"

- University Hospitals of Cleveland
- Specific father focused program
- "Dads2U"


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How do you teach dads?

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How do we involve fathers?

- Teach fathers how to breastfeed
- Do not suggest that the father can change diapers!!
  - Mom gets the head and I get the butt!
- Dad’s Job is to do our job when they go home

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What Is YOUR Role?

- Remember, you made this baby too!
- From labor coach to breastfeeding coach.
- Support support support!!!
The Value of DAD

► It takes two to make a baby

► The couple principle

► You have enormous pull in raising your baby

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Man Myths

- Breast feeding is women’s work!
- Mom needs a break from feeding during the night
- Breast feeding makes the breasts sag
- Breast feeding is just not natural

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#1 Man Myth

- Breastfeeding interferes with my chance to bond with the baby

- I want to bond with the baby too

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So What Do I Have to Do?

- Learn about your baby before he gets here
- Learn HOW to breast feed
- Be supportive
- Don’t be afraid
- LOVE, BREASTMILK AND WARMTH!!!
Three Things to Know

► When does my baby need to eat?

► How does my baby eat?

► When is my baby finished eating?

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SPORTS – Corrective Action

- SLAP
- PULL
- OBSERVE
- RELEASE
- TAP/TRY AGAIN
- SHOOT

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Wanna see my Boobees?  (USE HUMOR)

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Men, Sex, and Breastfeeding

The problem:

- Men are physical, sexual creatures
- Women ... not so much

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Problems for Dad

► “Madonna” Complex
   ▪ She’s a mother now

► She’s always holding the baby
   ▪ Q: Can you get pregnant while breastfeeding?
     ▶ A: Yes, but you should put the baby down first.

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Post partum mom problems

► She’s just not that into you
  ▪ AKA Decreased Libido (thank you prolactin)
  ▪ Increased Libido (thank you oxytocin)

► Vaginal Dryness
  ▪ Decreased Estrogen

► “all touched out”
  ▪ Baby care is a physical, demanding job

► TIRED!

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Questions?

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