

Breastfeeding in Public

Many women have reported feeling uncomfortable breastfeeding in public, even doing so discreetly. But it is important to remember that you are feeding your baby. You are not doing anything inappropriate. And even though it may seem taboo in some places, awareness of the need to support new breastfeeding mothers is building.

The federal government and many states have laws that protect nursing women. These laws are based on the recognition of organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Public Health Association, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO) that breastfeeding is the best choice for the health of a mother and her baby.

Even with the growing awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding, you may find it difficult to do so in public. Yet it is important to believe in yourself and your choice. Remind yourself that you can succeed and wear your confidence! Some tips for breastfeeding in public include:

- Wear clothes that allow easy access to your breasts, such as tops that pull up from the waist or button down.
- Use a special breastfeeding blanket around your shoulders. Some babies do not like this, though, so you'll have to see what works for your baby.
- Breastfeed your baby in a sling. Slings or other soft infant carriers are especially helpful for traveling – it makes it easier to keep your baby comforted and close to you.
- Slip into a women's lounge or dressing room to breastfeed.
- If you are worried about being too revealing in public, practice at home until you are comfortable.

Follow the instructions for infant slings very carefully. Check in with the Consumer Product Safety Commission for warnings before buying a sling.

It helps to breastfeed your baby before he or she becomes fussy so that you have time to get into a comfortable place or position to feed. (Over time, you will learn your baby's early hunger cues.) When you get to your destination, scout out a place you can breastfeed, if that makes you feel more comfortable.

- If someone criticizes you for breastfeeding in public, check out the La Leche League's website at <http://www.llli.org/> for possible ways to respond.

Most of all, it is important to remember that you are meeting your baby's needs. It isn't possible to stay home all the time, and you can feel free to feed your baby while out and about. You should be proud of your commitment! Plus, no bottles and formula means fewer supplies to pack!



Marilyn Nolt