

Obviously there are times when a father can give his baby a bottle. Babies who have a well-established nursing relationship can take bottles just fine – preferably with expressed breast milk, of course.

## Father's Role in Feeding

Research has shown that fathers can influence the diets of their families in some important ways. In one study, eighty-nine percent of the mothers served infrequently or eliminated from the family diet entirely those foods that their husbands disliked. In another study, eighty-one percent of mothers surveyed planned meals based on the food preferences and dislikes of their husbands. As a result of such studies, nutritionists now urge fathers to recognize the important effect that food tastes have on the nutritional well-being of their families.



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Your food preferences and dietary habits are the first important way you are involved in feeding. A nutritious age-appropriate diet is the very best for your baby. Your role in achieving this is essential.

During pregnancy, you and the baby's mother probably discussed how you wanted to feed your baby-by breast or bottle. If breastfeeding was your choice, your unswerving support during the time your baby is breastfed is crucial. If bottle-feeding was your choice, being knowledgeable about formula preparation and healthy feeding practices is necessary and valuable. Perhaps your choice was to breastfeed first and bottle-feed later, or to combine the two feeding methods. In any case, your support and involvement with feeding your baby will be helpful to your baby and pleasurable for you.

## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

Change the diapers, share in the cuddling, and when necessary, nighttime rocking or walking, are other ways fathers can show their support for breastfeeding and help provide for their babies' health and well-being.

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

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If your baby is breastfed, you obviously cannot directly provide milk for your baby, although you can give him bottles of expressed milk if there are times when it is inconvenient or impossible for your wife to breastfeed. There are other important ways you can be helpful during feedings. You can bring your baby to his mother for night feedings and then tuck him back in bed later. You can burp the baby after feedings and take the opportunity to enjoy the quiet but alert time he has after feeding.

Many breastfeeding mothers experience sore nipples, fatigue, and doubts about milk supply. Your encouragement and nurturing help are important. In fact, one study has shown a relationship between the father's support of breastfeeding and its success or failure.

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Another important way you can help is to teach other family members about breastfeeding, so they will understand and support this method of feeding. In the past, less was known about the benefits of breastfeeding than is known today, and feeding practices were different.

If your baby is bottle-fed, you can help by actively sharing the feedings with his mother. Make it your responsibility to mix formula in the proper way and to ensure that the feeding equipment is clean and functioning well.

Always hold your baby when you feed him. He will begin to trust that you love him and are able to satisfy his needs. To provide for normal eye muscle development, hold him sometimes in your right arm and sometimes in your left. Hold him so that his head is slightly elevated. Feeding in a flat position is associated with an increased incidence of middle ear infections.

Discontinue feeding your baby when he indicates that he is through. Burp him during and after feedings. The frequency of burping depends on how much air he tends to swallow.

Whether your baby is breast or bottle-fed, you can help by keeping feeding times calm. Run

interference with the doorbell and the telephone. Anything you do to reduce tension is beneficial.

When your baby is ready for table foods, you can be involved in many ways. You can help by making mealtime pleasant and happy. Tension during feedings diminishes appetite. Make an effort to indicate pleasure with the variety of foods you offer your baby even if the food does not appeal to you. As tempting as it might be, avoid using food as a reward for good behavior or a special accomplishment.

Never offer your baby junk food or alcohol. Neither is part of a nutritious diet, and each replaces the foods your baby does need for growth and health. In addition, even small amounts of alcohol can be toxic to a young child.

Your involvement with your child's mealtimes is important. You can have a significant effect on your baby's health, and your relationship will benefit from the time you spend together.