



Supporting Breastfeeding with Breast Massage

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Good for Baby/Good for Mom!

The health benefits of breastfeeding for mother, baby, and society are very compelling. Breastfeeding reduces infant mortality and morbidity, particularly before their own immune system matures, and it improves children's IQs. As they mature, infants who are breastfed for at least four months are less likely to develop diabetes, obesity, juvenile leukemia, heart disease, asthma, and ear infections. Their mouth, jaws and eyes develop better.

Mothers who breastfeed lose their pregnancy weight gain more rapidly. They have a reduced risk of ovarian and breast cancer, less osteoporosis, and less absenteeism at work because their babies are healthier. These benefits have led many medical groups and agencies, such as the World Health Organization, to recommend that women exclusively breastfeed their infants for at least the first six months, continuing breastfeeding for two years and beyond. Mother-to-mother breast-feeding support and certified lactation consultants worldwide at La Leche League International <http://www.llli.org>.

If she nurses her newborn, he is usually able and eager to do so immediately after birth. In fact, Swedish research showed that babies are capable, by the inborn step and rooting reflexes, of reaching the breast and nursing unassisted. When left on their mothers' bare abdomens after an unmedicated birth, most are able to crawl across their mother's abdomens, locate her nipple, and self-attach to feed. If medications and/or separation were necessary, most babies will



successfully breastfeed with mother's help. "Kangaroo care" also known as skin to skin contact and continual carrying of the newborn against the mother's chest is particularly effective. With kangaroo care, some medically stable preemies may even breastfeed, warmed by skin to skin contact with the mother, and go home sooner after birth.

More Detail on Teaching Breast Self-Massage

Intentions

To improve circulation in breast tissue for promoting robust milk production; to prevent clogging of milk ducts that may result in pain and/or breast infection (mastitis); to increase women's comfort with touching their breasts in a practical way that may lead to ease of manual milk expression and to preventing breast engorgement; to familiarize women with the texture and feel of their breasts for greater self-awareness and preventative breast care.

Procedures

1. After a feeding and before breasts refill with milk, find a comfortable, private area to spend 3 to 5 minutes massaging both breasts. Work through your clothing if preferred, but unhook your bra. During or after a shower or bath might be an ideal time that allows for direct contact. If you prefer to use a very small amount of lotion or other lubricant, remember to clean it off before nursing again, or use a natural, edible oil.



2. First place the index finger side of both your hands against your chest wall at your bra line. Rub briskly but gently up and down just inferior of the breasts in a motion that lifts and drops your breasts. Continue for 30-60 seconds.
3. Shift to use the fingertips of your opposite hand to perform a minute of circular kneading in the lymphatic areas of each axilla.
4. Continue with three rounds of fingertip circles around each breast, as if performing a self-examination for unusual lumps. Make this distinction though: work from the widest perimeter of breast tissue toward the nipple each time you reposition your hand.
5. Lean forward slightly so that your breasts shift away from your chest wall. Place one hand above and the other below the entire breast. Alternate pressure with each hand to gently knead the breast between your hands.
6. While still leaning slightly forward, and with your hands still in place, gently pull the breast further from the chest wall. Release and then press the breast against the chest wall and rib cage. Continue this alternating pull and press to create a lymphatic pumping of the area.



7. Shiatsu instructor, Pamela Ferguson, recommends an additional step to breast self-massage. Walk your fingers down vertical lines starting near your clavicle, continuing through your nipples, ending below your breasts. Walk back up toward the clavicle on the sternum until your fingertips are between your breasts. Walk up around the top of your breasts.⁴

8. She also can promote breast functioning and health through daily self-massage of the breast zones on and between the dorsal, lateral metatarsal bones. Show her where these zones are located, how to inch her way with finger or thumb tips, and how to easily work these areas each time she breastfeeds. See Foot Reflexive Zone Therapy (Figure 4.13).

References and Resources

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