

Seven tips for getting comfortable with nursing in public

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As a first-time breastfeeding mama, do you feel confident about feeding your baby in public? If so, that's fantastic: you have taken to heart that what you're doing is natural, normal, and nobody else's business! But if you are working up that confidence in yourself, here are seven tips to help you along.

1. Prepare before your baby is born. The adjustment to new parenthood is relentless, and figuring out feeding your baby can feel overwhelming. In the third trimester, but before your baby's birth, order comfortable bras and tops that you think will be nursing-friendly. If they are also maternity-friendly (your nurturing belly is likely to hang around for a while after birth), try them on while you're pregnant, and see how easy it is to access your breasts. If you have a baby doll you can use, sit in front of a mirror and see how much or how little of your breast is showing when you use these clothes for nursing positions. If you don't have a doll, try this after your baby is born. Many moms find it very confidence-boosting to feed facing a mirror and realize that very little of their breast is showing. If you do feel your breast is more visible than you'd prefer, you have time to find new options.

2. Know that the law recognizes the normalcy of breastfeeding and protects your rights. Federal law applies to all states, and it protects your right to breastfeed anywhere that you and your baby are

allowed to be. Many states (NYS included) have even stricter supportive laws than the federal one.

3. Practice breastfeeding in encouraging environments. You may not leave the house frequently in the first couple of weeks after your baby is born. When you do take your baby out, visit places where breastfeeding is openly supported. La Leche League meetings, hospitals' new moms' groups, and support groups hosted by local IBCLCs (Nourish has several active groups) are all great places to get social time and support while you get used to feeding your baby whenever he is hungry.

4. Feed your baby as soon as she gives you feeding cues. Quickly latching your baby when she first starts pecking at you or sucking her fist will be much less noticeable than trying while she's screaming because you were looking for the perfect place.

5. Practice baby-wearing. Baby wraps, slings, and carriers are a great way to support a hungry baby and give him access to your breast while retaining greater privacy. There are baby-wearing support groups in many cities (e.g., Babywearing International), and the parents in them are really lovely about helping new moms figure out what kind of baby-wearing will work best. There are also many great YouTube videos with instructions.

6. Decide how you want to handle anyone who may approach you about feeding your baby. Most



moms who breastfeed actually never hear anything negative about it from strangers around them. But it can help to decide in advance how you'll respond if someone does. Examples: *"I have the legal right to breastfeed anywhere in public or private."* *"We don't eat in the bathroom any more than anyone else does. Thanks, though."* *"I'm busy feeding my child, and I don't know you. I'll ask you to step away and leave us alone now."* It is not your duty to disarm anyone who is irritated by you feeding your baby, but some moms find it helps to smile broadly at anyone who appears to be looking askance at them while they nurse.

7. Do what works for you. If that means tossing a light blanket or nursing cover over your feeding baby, great. If that means feeding pumped milk when you go out, fantastic. (Just know that your breasts still need to be emptied every 2-3 hours to maintain your supply.) If that means pulling your shirt under your breast to feed your child openly, wonderful. Over time, the method(s) you choose may change. The important thing is to nurture and nourish that baby whom you love so much.



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and free support groups in Rochester, NY.

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