

# FATHERS

are an important member of the breastfeeding team. When fathers support breastfeeding and are involved in caring for the baby, breastfeeding improves, the parental relationship is better, and their infants develop more quickly.

## BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding matters because it is a low-cost way of providing the best nutrition for the baby. It protects the baby against common illnesses both in the short and long-term. It reduces the risk of cancer and other conditions in the mother. The cost of not breastfeeding is huge for families and nations. Breastfeeding is also a climate-smart decision and key to the Sustainable Development Goals.

WHO and UNICEF recommend:

- ▶ Early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth.
- ▶ Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life.
- ▶ Continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond, with the introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods at 6 months.



**WARM CHAIN OF SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING:** The Warm Chain places the mother-baby dyad at the core and follows the first 1,000 days timeline. It strives to link different actors by coordinating efforts at all levels to provide a continuum of care. Each actor or link in the Warm Chain may already be part of an existing initiative such as the BFHI or a community health programme. With consistent messages and proper referral systems throughout the warm chain, the mother-baby dyad will benefit from ongoing support and breastfeeding counselling. All mothers are then empowered with a more satisfying and effective breastfeeding experience. A warm chain of support will help build an enabling environment for breastfeeding and protect against industry influence.

# As a **FATHER**, you can support breastfeeding in many ways

- 1.** Work together with the mother as equal partners in a parenting team and set breastfeeding goals together as a family. Inform family members about your breastfeeding goals and ask for support as needed.
- 2.** Learn about the importance of breastfeeding and how it works, from locally available sources such as antenatal/postnatal classes, healthcare visits or online resources. Seek help from community support groups or professionals if there are challenges.
- 3.** Communicate with the mother regularly and pay attention to when and how she wants you to be involved in breastfeeding. Trust her – sometimes all that is needed is moral support and encouragement.
- 4.** Create an environment that is conducive for breastfeeding at home. Share domestic tasks in and around the home and, if you have older children, take the opportunity to spend extra time caring for them. This will give the mother time to focus on breastfeeding.
- 5.** Build your own unique bond with your baby during exclusive breastfeeding by actively interacting, carrying, cuddling and caring for your baby. After 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding, both parents can share the feeding of complementary foods.
- 6.** Discuss with your partner on ways to allocate and manage maternity or parental leave and how to access workplace support to enable optimal breastfeeding.
- 7.** Actively share your experiences of breastfeeding with other parents and friends. This could be through social media or community support groups. Support breastfeeding in public places.
- 8.** Watch out for misleading marketing of breastmilk substitutes and related products. It is not allowed according to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. Inform your health worker if you see such violations.
- 9.** How else can YOU protect, promote and support breastfeeding?  
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**World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)**



This card was developed in collaboration with Family Initiative.

