

Family medicine doctor talks about importance of support for breastfeeding moms

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Most women understand the benefits of breastfeeding their infants, but there are physical and emotional roadblocks that can make it a challenge for moms. During the first weeks of a baby's life it is vital for mom to be able to focus on caring for herself and nursing her infant.

"One of the biggest issues for new moms is exhaustion," said Kimi Suh, MD, family medicine physician at Loyola University Health System and assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

"Moms are already sore and tired from being post-partum and it can be exhausting and difficult to feed the baby on demand at all hours."

Breastfeeding is a learning process for both mom and baby and requires patience and practice. While in the hospital, moms should take advantage of resources such as lactation consultants who are readily available to assist with establishing good breastfeeding practices and offer advice on common problems, such as trouble latching on.

"I often tell my new moms don't wait to ask for help. Getting the right latch is vital and can be difficult. Having someone with experience there to guide you can make all the difference," said Suh.

Though everyone is excited to meet the newest arrival, the early days

after delivery are extremely important for a mom and baby who are breastfeeding. Moms need to be able to practice feeding and not worry about anything else, including visitors.

"Visitors can wait. Use these early days to become confident in breastfeeding. While in the hospital use the time to practice nursing and get some help from experts to feel comfortable without worrying about privacy," said Suh.

According to Suh one of the most important components for a breastfeeding mom is a strong support team. Many people may be disappointed that mom is breastfeeding because they are hoping to have the fun of feeding the baby with a bottle themselves, but there are a lot of other important ways friends and loved ones can be a part of caring for the baby while supporting mom.

Suh suggests supporters:

- Get up with mom in the middle of the night and see how to be of help or just to keep her company
- Change diapers
- Keep breastfeeding mom's water glass full
- Prepare a snack or a meal she can eat while feeding the baby
- Do chores such as laundry, cleaning the house or grocery shopping
- If there are other children help, keep them happy and busy

"Emotional support is extremely important to help a mom breastfeed successfully. Because they are the only ones who can provide the baby with nutrition, moms can feel solely responsible if the baby is upset or something isn't going right. They can get frustrated and feel they are doing something wrong, and even feel like they should give up on breastfeeding. It's important to remind mom what a great job she's

doing," Suh said.

Too often moms are worried about their weight or feel like they have to immediately jump into being the primary caretaker. Suh says these first few weeks need to be about making mom as happy and comfortable as possible.

"There may not be a lot of sleep, but if mom wants chocolate, mom can have chocolate," said Suh. "Keeping mom less stressed not only helps her emotional health, but also improves the quality and quantity of the milk she produces. Breastfeeding [moms](#) need to take it one day at a time. If something doesn't seem right, she should try not to get stressed out. Instead, she can reach out to her medical provider or lactation consultant, who is there to support her."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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