

# Plus-Size & Breastfeeding:

The birth of your baby is an exciting time. Being able to provide your baby with breast milk is important for so many mamas. Although this journey can be challenging for a mama of any size, it can be even more of a challenge for a plus size mama. Being a plus size woman and breastfeeding, can be challenging both hormonally and physically. Unfortunately, many times mamas aren't made aware of these challenges until they are actually faced with them. This can be frustrating, at the same time very discouraging and ultimately one of the reasons why breastfeeding is discontinued earlier than planned.

The good thing to understand is that being a plus size mama DOES NOT mean you cannot have a successful breastfeeding experience. **YOU ABSOLUTELY CAN!**

Here are a few ways you can prepare for breastfeeding as a plus sized woman

## 1. Have Your Hormone Levels Checked:

- Once you give birth your body decreases in the pregnancy hormones and it increases in lactation hormones. If you're overweight/ plus size because of endocrine hormone problems, like PCOS or thyroid disease, you may have issues with your milk production, because these conditions can also affect production of the hormones that trigger your body to make milk.

*In most instances, milk production can be improved with a few modifications. Extra breast stimulation, the use of herbal galactagogues like Fenugreek, or prescription medications are an option, too.*

- The first milk your baby will get is called Colostrum. This milk is thick, yellow, and contains antibodies to protect your newborn from disease. When you are a plus size woman, it can take longer to lactate due to the hormone issues we just mentioned. For some, it can take an additional 24 – 48 hours for mamas to lactate.

*Tip: The best thing you can do if this is the case, is NOT to PANIC! Put the baby to the breast frequently and effectively, get in as much skin-to-skin as you can, fuel your body and stay hydrated. Remember, every drop counts.*

## 2. See a IBCLC before giving birth:

- An IBCLC will look at your specific needs as a plus size breastfeeding mama. This is why it's good to have your hormones checked prior to your visit so your LC can look over things and provide you with the best

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## Supporting Mamas One Feeding at a Time!

support and resources based on what they can see. Some mamas will take another test once their baby is born to assess things deeper.

- During your pre-birth check with an LC, they will also do a breast exam and assessment to help develop a breastfeeding plan to help you meet your goal – from what positions might work best to how to better support your breasts while feeding. Also, what many mamas don't know is some insurance companies now cover Lactation Services.

### 3. Take a Breastfeeding Class:

- Taking a breastfeeding class will help give you an overall understanding of how exactly breastfeeding works. This will help prepare you for those rough days. Also, this can help provide some reassurance that some things you may experience are normal and have nothing to do with certain challenges you may have due to being plus size and breastfeeding.

*For example, healthy newborn babies are expected to lose 7-10% of their birth weight, but should regain that weight within 2 weeks. Babies are born with extra fluids due to labor medications and IV fluids during labor.*

*A plus size mama may think this has something to do with her milk production when it actually does not. Again this is why it's so important*

*you see a knowledgeable LC to help assess your specific situation.*

So, now that we've talked about the hormonal factors let's touch on the physical.

All breasts come in a variety of shapes and sizes. However, many times mamas who are plus size typically have larger breasts. Well, there's a myth that larger breasts make more milk than mamas with small breasts. This is just not the case. Knowing this is important because mamas with larger breasts often put extra pressure on themselves to produce large amounts of milk based on breast size vs on the needs of their baby. This is another reason why taking a breastfeeding course is highly recommended for every breastfeeding mama.

With the added pressure to produce a large amount of milk along with the thought of breastfeeding with large breasts can be daunting, especially if you're not informed early on.

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Here are some tips to help you support the girls (.) (.)

- **Get a Good Supportive Bra:**
  - You don't need anything fancy. Get a good quality bra that is not too tight, but provides good back support.
- **Support the Breast During a Feeding & Thank me Later:**
  - Use a sling, around the neck and under the breast
  - Place a rolled up towel under the breast to help prop the breast up
- **Look for Positions that Work for You:**
  - Experiment with different breastfeeding positions to see what works for both you and the baby. There are 5 different breastfeeding positions. Cradle hold, Crossover hold, Football hold, Laid-back position ("biological nursing"), and Side-lying position.

Note: Every mama's experience is different so try each position out to see which you feel most comfortable with.

- **Try Using Breastfeeding Accessories:**
  - Invest in a back pillow
  - Use a nursing pillow
- **Consider Shaping the Breast During a Feeding:**

- Use the "C" hold
- Use the "Scissor hold" while pulling the breast back allowing for a clear airway

- **Wear Clothes That Give You Confidence and Make You Feel Comfortable:**

This is very important. Especially as you start to go out. Wearing tops that allow you to nurse your baby in public confidently will help greatly.

For example, The "2-Shirt nursing method" can help with this. You basically pull up your top shirt on one side, pull down your under shirt, latch your baby and boom, you're feeding your little one. Having a small towel to place under the breast to help support the breast during this time can help, too.

On this journey having the right support and resources is key to a successful breastfeeding experience for plus size mamas. Educating yourself can help you to have a successful experience and leave you ultimately feeling more confident about your breastfeeding journey.

Lastly, I want to encourage you to do your best and believe in your ability.

At the end of the day, take it one day at a time, one feeding at a time. This journey is not easy, but it is possible. If you need more support, [get consulted](#). I can help!

You can do this! Good luck, mama.

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