

ISSUE 2**AUGUST 2022**

THE ARIF TIMES

Achieving Resilient and Inspiring Families

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Welcome to The ARIF Times

Join us in this mission to support the New Generation!

World Breastfeeding Week in August (every 1 to 7 August) commemorates the Innocenti Declaration signed in August 1990, by government policymakers, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and other organisations to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. As we embrace and celebrate this special week, we congratulate mothers who have had this unique experience of breastfeeding.

The preparation to breastfeeding starts from the antenatal period. There are classes in various hospitals to give valuable tips for pregnant mums. Upon delivery, there are also lactation consultants who can continue to advise, support every breastfeeding mum. In this special issue, we highlight the roles of fathers in supporting breastfeeding. Mums, you are not alone in this breastfeeding journey!

Benefits of Breastfeeding for Mother and Baby

In current times, with clean water and a hygienic environment, we may hear and understand that breastfeeding is a lifestyle choice, an option for some. Nevertheless, the benefits of breastfeeding supersede the inconvenience caused, if any.

Breastfeeding is part of the continuum of a woman who becomes pregnant and subsequently gives birth to her baby. One could say that it is a natural process in life.

The WHO promotes exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, and to continue breastfeeding, with introducing nutrient-dense complimentary food, for two years and beyond.

Breastfeeding is the perfect food for the baby, protects him, and helps the dyad (mother and baby) bond. The act of breastfeeding makes a baby feels safe and secure, emotionally and physiologically.

A mother's milk is designed as the source of food that promote baby's growth and development. It is very easily digested by the baby's system, and contains the right balance of nutrients, live antibodies, growth factors, and so many other things that researchers yet to discover. Breastmilk helps a baby develop a strong immune system, and also changes to adapt to the baby's needs as he grows older.

Breastfeeding is beneficial to mothers. It helps with postpartum healing and health, such as encouraging the womb to shrink to its original size. Breastfeeding continues to confer protection to mothers well after the postpartum period, by increasing bone mass to reduce the risk to osteoporosis. It also helps reduce the risk of certain cancers as well as diabetes.

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What is the ruling on breastfeeding?

"Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing (period). Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable.

No person is charged with more than his capacity.

No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child..."

(The Qur'an, 2:233. Translation: Saheeh International)

From this verse, we can deduce that:

- The mother of a child has an option to breastfeed her child.
- She also has the right to breastfeed.
- She is to receive support from the father of the child, during the period she breastfeeds their child.
- The father is responsible to make arrangements that the child is cared for, ie, to be breastfed by the baby's mother, or by someone else, or if the baby is to be weaned, that it is to be a mutual agreement.

The guidance on breastfeeding is multi-layered, ensuring that due respect and justice prevails for all parties - mother, baby and father.



Did you know?

Prophet Muhammad was mostly breastfed by his wet nurse, Halimah As-Sa'diah.

Breastfeeding is hard work and requires resilience and patience. In order for breastfeeding to be successful, consider these two actions:

1. Adequate preparation before giving birth

This means both husband and wife could attend breastfeeding workshops and research more on breastfeeding. This hopefully will give some semblance on what to expect when the baby comes, and to slowly transit to a different role as parents.

2. Getting the right support

This includes ensuring that the breastfeeding journey is comfortable and helpful, with the help of like-minded family members and friends;

- joining breastfeeding communities such as the Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group (Singapore), so that parents will continue to feel motivated to breastfeed
- knowing which professionals to contact, such as an IBCLC, should there be obstacles along the way.

The Breastfeeding Triad - Father's role in Breastfeeding.

As part of World Breastfeeding Week, we shift the focus from our breastfeeding mothers to fathers of breastfed babies. Fathers are increasingly being recognized as a fundamental member of the breastfeeding triad which includes the mother, father and baby.



An international nonprofit organisation that organizes advocacy, education and training related to breastfeeding, La Leche League describes the father's role:

The father's role in the breastfeeding relationship is one of a provider, helpmate and companion to the mother; by thus supporting her, he enables her to mother the baby more completely.

So, what can fathers do to contribute in the breastfeeding triad?

- Know the basics of breastfeeding. Often, mothers know the basics of breastfeeding but may have some challenges in applying their knowledge well while trying to grasp many other new information and techniques. Hence, it helps for the fathers to be supportive of their wives and provide unwavering reassurance.
- Little actions like bringing a cup of water to your wife or giving her a smile goes a long way.
- Support, protect and promote breastfeeding.
- Comforting your baby – The love hormone - oxytocin is released when you hold, cuddle and care for your baby. Find some time for skin-to-skin contact with your baby to promote bonding and a sense of connection.
- Maintain your closeness as a couple.

References:

<https://www.llli.org/the-evolution-of-the-support-concept/>

<https://www.laleche.org.uk/parenting-when-your-partner-breastfeeds/>

https://www.lllc.ca/sites/default/files/HowFathersHelp430_1.pdf

Project ARIF fathers share their experience:

"It has been both a joy and challenging journey so far. What's important is making sure my partner is not alone in this and that I can play my part to ease her load by giving her enough rest and being heavily involved in other aspect of the baby's caregiving."

Andi (Breastfeeding triad: Dewi-Andi-Sofia)

"Being a breastfeeding daddy has been wonderful and satisfying. It is an intimate bond with no words to describe."

Md Firman (Breastfeeding triad: Nazartul Shehnaz - Firman- Ayyash Arham)

"Honestly, I was fine during my wife's breastfeeding period. In fact, I think it is best for mother and baby to bond while I support in other ways in the relationship. For me, there was a lot to learn. Fatherhood is an eye-opening journey. I learnt and helped to store and warm up expressed breastmilk. Feeding my daughter expressed breast milk was my time to bond with her. The best moment was by eating brownies together - I was eating my ordinary brownies while my wife ate her lactation brownies."

***Abdul Khaliq
(Breastfeeding triad: Siti Nuraisah - Abdul Khaliq - Ana Sofea)***

Taking on a new role as a father can be challenging.



However, you are not alone.

There are many resources and support available for you.



Remember to take care of yourself physically and mentally so that you will be able to care for your family.