



Standard 7: Avoid any practice that restricts nursing or separates you from your baby

Mothers and babies are biologically programmed to want and to need to be together; that is why they are often described as a mother baby dyad. Current research shows that your presence is especially important in your baby's first three years of life. You help your baby learn to trust you and to feel secure and safe by breastfeeding him and by staying close to him. This close relationship also contributes to optimal brain growth and emotional development (*The Seven Standards of Ecological Breastfeeding*, p. 56).

Once breastfeeding is well established, it is effortless and enjoyable for many women and babies. If you need to go out, why not just bring baby with you? If you feel uncomfortable nursing in public, there are many stylish nursing covers you can buy online. However, nursing covers are not necessary if you feel comfortable without one. You can also use a blanket or a sweater to help you nurse more modestly. Most states have laws in place to help protect a woman's right to breastfeed in public.

Very little equipment is needed when going out with your breastfed baby. All you need is a diaper, some wipes and a change of clothes in case of diaper leakage. Your milk is always warm and ready for your baby to drink. This is especially helpful when taking a longer trip, for instance, in an airplane. There are fewer and fewer items, it seems, that are allowed on one's person when going through security. Breastfeeding just makes it that much easier to navigate that whole process. Also, by comforting your baby at the breast at take-off, landing, and while in the air, you will help make the experience enjoyable for you and your baby.

Once you get used to taking baby everywhere with you, I think it will grow on you and you will feel more and more confident about it. It seems like more work to find someone to watch your baby for a few hours and then pump while you are out, then to simply bring your baby with you. Also, as time goes on, you will learn which businesses have changing tables and chairs for you to sit in and nurse. Some businesses even have toy boxes for older infants and toddlers. It will be a fun adventure to take a day trip with baby!

If you do need a little time out by yourself (I find that I start to come unglued when I do not get at least a short time out once or twice a week), your husband or other family member may be able to assist you. You might want to schedule such a time during one of baby's naptimes or just after nursing him. I like to bring a cell phone with me in case the baby suddenly needs me. Also, adjust your amount of time gone to the age and needs of your baby. Sheila Kippley recommends waiting until your baby is at least one year of age before beginning separations.