

# Advantages of the right nursing pillow

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There are excellent reasons for breastfeeding a child. There are in fact benefits in terms of health for children who take their mother's milk, which result in a lower rate of respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections, otitis, allergies, youth diabetes, metabolic disorders and some types of tumours. There are also real advantages for mothers who breastfeed, which include a lower risk of breast and cervical cancer, and osteoporosis. Without counting the psychological and economic advantages deriving from breast feeding.

**Extremely important for the positive outcome of breastfeeding is the position** chosen for attaching the child in the most correct way. There isn't an ideal position for breastfeeding, and each woman will use, even changing it each time, the position that at that moment and in any given situation will be easier and more comfortable for her and her child. The positions used more often include the "sitting position" (the typical one, in the mother's arms), the "stretched out" position (the mother on her side with the baby also laying on his side), and the "rugby player" position (the baby's body is kept under the mother's armpit with one arm while she holds his head with the other, just like a rugby ball).

**What makes the choice of these positions easier and more comfortable in any circumstance and environment is the use of a nursing pillow.** A nursing pillow, when suitable, can provide the necessary support for both the mother and child. In fact, without a pillow, the mother's arm muscles tire and the child can slowly slip downward, thus changing attachment to the breast and causing nipple pain.

A vast variety of pillows is available on the market, and very often the mother may feel confused and uncertain when choosing the pillow. The right choice is very important, because the good or bad outcome of breastfeeding can depend on this.

**A properly designed nursing pillow must be able to solve many of the problems** mother's come across during breastfeeding. It must:

- be able to support the tension of the back, neck and shoulders of the nursing mother
- be circular in shape, which relieves the pressure on the woman's abdomen during breastfeeding
- provide secure support for the infant sucking on the mother's breast

- be neither too soft (otherwise the child could “sink” into the pillow, causing drops in oxygen saturation), nor too hard (making it less comfortable and welcoming as well as less safe)
- be made of breathable material, able to prevent excessive heating or excessive sweating (the infant’s thermoregulation mechanisms are still too immature and excessive heating could be harmful)
- be made with anti-allergic material and covered in natural fabrics (not synthetics) so as not to irritate the delicate skin of infants.

The correct choice in nursing pillows is essential for bringing the child to the breast and consequently for the positive outcome of breastfeeding, thus avoiding the onset of pain and fissures. In fact, especially at the beginning, the child’s hard sucking stretches out the nipple and the areola tissue causing a physiological state of soreness. When positioning on the breast is incorrect, this causes harmful nipple traction and the soreness will turn into veritable pain of the nipple or breast with the possible onset, over time, of annoying fissures that are difficult to heal.

**Hence mothers must remember that the right nursing pillow is always a useful aid** and that in certain circumstances it can make the difference. For example, infants with weak muscle tone and premature babies tend to feed better when their body is stably supported. Mothers who suffer from forms of disability might require the extra support of a nursing pillow in order to be able to breastfeed comfortably. Mothers of twins can be made able to breastfeed both children simultaneously with the help of the right pillow.

Let us also remember that some of the more recent pillow models **can also be used for other purposes, even after the neonatal period.** They can in fact be used to support the baby immediately after being breastfed, making it possible to raise the child's head, thus reducing the number of times and volume of milk brought up that can occur after the meal (a certain degree of gastroesophageal reflux accompanied by bringing up milk is present in almost all infants right after birth). They can then be used as a support for the baby when he begins to sit up or crawl, thus favouring the development and maturation of the muscles of the upper body. And let us not forget the help they can give the mother during pregnancy, making it possible for her to take positions that favour circulation and relaxation, and following delivery providing her the necessary support that enables relaxing of the back and neck, always very tense just after childbirth.

Therefore we can confirm that a nursing pillow is very important for the health of the mother and child before, during and after breastfeeding and that the choice of the most suitable product must be guided by correct and qualified information.

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## **Bibliography**

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