



NURSING BRAS

What exactly is a nursing bra?

There are many styles of nursing bras, each with its own unique features. They usually have one or more of the following qualities, however: fold-back cups; snaps, located at the gore, that open horizontally to expose the breast; one-hand release clasps, usually located along the front bra straps, so the cup can fold down to expose the breast; crisscross wrap design, whereby the cups are folded over each other over the chest (so cups can easily be pulled away to expose the breasts for feeding); and inner framing that surrounds each breast for additional support.

What should I look for in a nursing bra?

The main thing to look for in a nursing bra is a proper fit. After all, coverage is key when it comes to comfort. That said, a nursing bra should fit similar to a regular bra; there should be no bulges above the bra's edge, along the front or at the underarm. (TIP: Allow a finger's width between any point in the cup and your breast for growth, and keep in mind that the cup must be large enough to accommodate the entire breast.)

The midriff should never be fleshy. If so, the band size may be too small, and a bra with a wider band may be required.

Likewise, bra straps should not dig into the shoulders. Straps are for comfort and should not be used to gain support. (TIP: Straps should be loose enough to slip a finger between the strap and the shoulder.)

There should be no wrinkles in the cup. Nursing bra cups are usually made of fabrics that offer movement—to allow for stretching over the breast and for size fluctuation. More rigid cups are available, however, for women who prefer more rigid support.

The back of the bra should fit snugly against the back, but should not dig into the flesh. The bottom edge of the band should be anchored below the shoulder blades. Also, the back of the bra should not ride up. This may be an indication that the bra is too small, that the band size is too large, or that the straps may be pulled too tight.

Why should I buy a nursing bra?

Nursing bras are more structured than regular bras and are usually lined with cotton for increased comfort—specifically for sensitive breast tissue. Nursing bras also have soft cups that can be easily moved aside or opened for easier access to the breast during nursing. (The benefit is that the bra does not have to be removed for such feedings.)

Most nursing bras have wider, adjustable straps that allow for small fluctuations in breast size—which is likely to occur throughout the nursing period. This allows sufficient room for nursing pads. Similarly, most nursing bras have additional hook-and-eye sets at the back to allow for adjustments in band size.

When should I buy a nursing bra?

During pregnancy, breast tissue can become increasingly sensitive to the fabrics used in traditional bras. That's because breast size, and even band width, will continually change throughout the pregnancy. When the regular bra becomes too tight (i.e., uncomfortable), then, it may be wise to purchase a nursing bra (this usually occurs towards the end of pregnancy; after the eighth month). In most cases, the breast size at the end of pregnancy will remain the same after childbirth.

How many nursing bras do I need?

On average, new mothers will purchase four nursing bras during and after pregnancy. Since many new mothers find they have less time for laundry and other chores, most buy more than one nursing bra for convenience.

How should I clean and care for my nursing bras?

If using the washing machine, always use the gentle cycle along with skin-sensitive detergents. (While nursing, the skin and nipple may become increasingly sensitive to harsh chemicals. A gentle detergent will also maintain the softness of the fabric to provide comfort to chapped/dry nipples.) Whenever possible, allow the nursing bra to air dry. This will preserve the shape and elasticity of the garment.

BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding is an emotional and nutritional experience for both the mother and the baby. And Warner's, like Health Canada, encourages all the benefits that breastfeeding can bring.

For baby:

- Breast milk has the correct amount and quality of nutrients that babies require
- Breast milk contains antibodies that help to protect against infection and disease
- Breast milk enhances brain development
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For mom:

- Breastfeeding hormones help mothers relax in order to begin the process of maternal-infant bonding
- Breastfeeding helps the uterus to contract back to its non-pregnant size
- Breastfeeding provides some protection from pre-menopausal breast cancer, cervical cancer, and osteoporosis

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