



☰ MENU

SUPPORT FOR TRANSGENDER & NON-BINARY PARENTS

La Leche League is an international, nonprofit, nonsectarian organisation.¹

LLL supports everyone who wants to breastfeed or chestfeed in reaching their goals.

We at La Leche League have all nursed our babies. If you want to do the same, whoever you are, whatever your story is, we're here to help. LLLI is committed to serving everyone inclusive of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental ability, socio-economic status, political views, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, or other protected status.

Trans men, trans women, and non-binary individuals may choose to breastfeed or chestfeed their babies. You do not need to have given birth to breastfeed or chestfeed, as we can also see in the experiences of those nursing adopted babies.

Canadian LLL Leader and transgender dad Trevor MacDonald writes that, *"It is equally important to note that some trans people experience severe gender dysphoria when breast or chestfeeding, and that they may decide not to nurse their babies for mental health reasons. Trans parents choosing to breast or chestfeed **and** those choosing to suppress lactation and bottlefeed may require the support of breastfeeding counsellors or lactation professionals."*² It is also the case that some parents with gender dysphoria choose to pump and bottlefeed their milk to their baby.

Whether you are pregnant, nursing your baby, pumping your milk, using donor milk, mixed feeding or considering your options La Leche League is here for you.

Please note that some of the links in this post will take you to articles or websites where you may notice gendered language.

AMAZING MILK

One of the concepts La Leche League is founded on is that: *human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.*

Human milk is amazing. It has everything a growing baby needs in exactly the right amounts and babies can easily digest it all. Research shows that a baby who is not fed on human milk is more likely to suffer from illnesses and diseases, both as a child and later in life.

By meeting your baby's needs for warmth, food and security at your chest you give them a secure attachment so they can develop into a confident child.

SKIN-TO-SKIN

Skin-to-skin contact is beneficial for babies and parents; it simply means holding your naked baby on your bare chest. You can drape a blanket over you both for warmth. Within minutes, you will see the benefits of skin-to-skin as you and your baby relax. Your baby's body temperature, breathing, and heart rate will stabilise. Babies often latch on and nurse more efficiently during and after skin-to-skin contact.

It is a lovely way to nurture your baby even if you are not nursing.

YOUR MILK SUPPLY

Some transgender and non-binary parents have a full milk supply.

If you have had chest (top) surgery you may be able to produce some milk. Many factors will affect the amount of milk you can make.

Two reasons that a trans man or non-binary individual might have a reduced milk supply are:

1. Milk-making tissue has been surgically removed, and/or ducts have been damaged in surgery.
2. Testosterone interferes with the hormone necessary for lactation (prolactin) and can cause a significant decrease in milk supply. However, taking testosterone would not prevent someone from using an at-chest supplementer and having a nursing relationship.

Trans women can use a protocol similar to adoptive and other non-gestational mothers and stimulate their milk supply: it is called the Newman-Goldfarb protocol. You can read more **here** (<https://www.laleche.org.uk/relactation-induced-lactation/>) and **here** (http://www.asklenore.info/breastfeeding/induced_lactation/protocols4print.shtml). A number of different protocols are described **here** (<http://sweetpeabreastfeeding.com/generic-protocols-for-inducing-lactation-or-relactation.html>). Our article about ***Breastfeeding Without Giving Birth*** (<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-without-giving-birth-2/>) may also be useful. Transfeminine nursing parents may also need to take the hormone spironolactone to suppress their testosterone. Read a case report of induced lactation in a transgender woman **here** (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5779241/>).

You can also give human milk or formula supplements using an at-breast supplementer. Your healthcare provider can help you look at your options, and your local LLL Leader can offer support with your breast or chestfeeding goals and journey.

You may find the following websites have useful information, you may notice gendered language in them:

- **Breastfeeding After Breast and Nipple Surgery** (<http://bfar.org/index.shtml?fref=gc>)
- **Low Milk Supply** (<http://www.lowmilksupply.org/>)

Many parents worry about whether their baby is ‘getting enough’. LLL meetings are a good place to get support from others.

These LLL posts are great for checking signs your baby is feeding effectively, you may notice gendered language in them:

- **Is my Baby Getting Enough Milk?** (<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info/is-baby-getting-enough/>)
- **Signs of Effective Feeding in the Early Days** (<https://www.laleche.org.uk/signs-effective-feeding-early-days-2/>)

USING A NURSING SUPPLEMENTER

If your baby needs a supplement of expressed milk or formula you might want to consider using a nursing supplementer. Doing this can give your baby that extra milk while they are nursing.

Supplementers can help parents have an at-breast or at-chest relationship with their baby whether or not they are able to produce milk.

This post (<https://www.laleche.org.uk/nursing-supplementers/>) has lots of useful information about nursing supplementers.

Read about a transgender dad's experience of using a supplementer [here](#).

Read a mother's story about the long term use of a supplementer **[here](https://www.laleche.org.uk/in-praise-of-at-breast-supplementers/)** (<https://www.laleche.org.uk/in-praise-of-at-breast-supplementers/>).

MILK SHARING

Some transgender and non-binary parents use milk banks to acquire human milk for their babies. La Leche League fully supports the use of human milk for babies; we cannot facilitate or set up milk sharing networks, though your local LLL Leader can help you with contact information for non-profit human milk banks, other regulated collection centres, and formal/medically supervised or informal milk sharing networks.³

Human milk banks provide pasteurised, screened donor milk. In some countries (for example the US) it may be *pooled* – this means milk from different donors is mixed. In some countries, and individual milk banks, milk pooling is not carried out.

There are documented benefits and risks to informal milk sharing. Benefits of human milk include, but are not limited to:

- Optimal nutrition
- Easy digestibility
- Immunological protection

Risks of sharing milk can include, but are not limited to:

- Transmission of certain infectious agents, like bacteria or viruses, some of which may be found in milk expressed by asymptomatic people
- Medicines and other drugs
- Environmental contaminants as a result of unhygienic storage and handling of unprocessed donated milk

Human Milk for Human Babies (HM4HB) is an “**informed milk sharing network**” (<http://www.hm4hb.net/>), and is an international organisation that many parents use to source human milk. Another organisation is Eats On Feets, it offers more information about safe milksharing practices, you can find resources here <http://www.eatsonfeetsresources.org/> (<http://www.eatsonfeetsresources.org/>) and a world map with milksharing chapters around the world here <http://www.eatsonfeets.org/> (<http://www.eatsonfeets.org/>)

LLL SUPPORT

All nursing parents need support and La Leche League is a great place to find it.

There are LLL groups in over 80 countries across the world, many offer meetings open to all – **contact your local group** (<https://www.llli.org/get-help/>) to find out how they can support you.

Many groups also have private **Facebook groups** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LLLI.Breastfeeding.Support/>) where you can ask questions and connect with other nursing parents.

LLL meetings are held in a wide range of venues – LLL is not affiliated to, and does not endorse or support, any business, organisation or religion whose premises we use.

OTHER SUPPORT

- ⊕ Queer and genderqueer inclusive LLL Facebook group for support ‘Inducing Lactation & Relactation’ (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/lllinducinglactation/>)
- ⊕ International Facebook group for ‘Birthing and Breast or Chestfeeding Trans People and Allies’ (https://www.facebook.com/groups/TransReproductiveSupport/?fref=gc&hc_location=ufi)

International Facebook group for ‘Trans Feminine Breastfeeding and Lactation Support’

*Please ask to join the ‘**Trans Feminine Breastfeeding and Lactation Support**’ group from within the ‘**Birthing and Breast or Chestfeeding Parents and Allies**’ (https://www.facebook.com/groups/TransReproductiveSupport/?fref=gc&hc_location=ufi) group.*

LLL RESOURCES

- ⊕ Breastfeeding Without Giving Birth (<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-without-giving-birth-2/>)
- ⊕ My journey: non-binary nursing, a story from LLLUSA (<https://www.lllusa.org/my-journey-non-binary-nursing/>)
- ⊕ Sostengo per genitori transgender e non binari, LLL Italia (<https://www.lllitalia.org/38-articoli-e-approfondimenti/allattamento-e-societa/692-sostegno-per-genitori-transgender-e-non-binari.html?highlight=WyJ0cmFuc2dlbmRlciJd>)
- ⊕ Información general: Transgénero/transexual/ Género fluido, La Liga de la Leche de Euskadi (<https://laligadelaleche.eu/circunstancias-especiales-es/informacion-general-transgenero-transexual-genero-fluido-ero-fluido/>)
- ⊕ Lactancia materna. Apoyando a mujeres transexuales, La Liga de la Leche de Euskadi (<https://laligadelaleche.eu/circunstancias-especiales-es/lactancia-materna-apoyando-a-mujeres-transexuales-2/>)
- ⊕ Lactancia. Apoyando a hombres transexuales, La Liga de la Leche de Euskadi (<https://laligadelaleche.eu/circunstancias-especiales-es/lactancia-materna-apoyando-a-hombres-transexuales/>)
- ⊕ Apoyo Para Parentalidades Transgénero Y No-Binarias, LLLI (<https://www.llli.org/informacion-sobre-la-lactancia-materna-de-la-a-a-la-z/apoyo-para-parentalidades-transgenero-y-no-binarias/>)

OTHER RESOURCES

- ⊕ Trans breastfeeding FAQ (<http://dianawest.com/trans-breastfeeding-faq/?fref=gc>)
- ⊕ Transmasculine individuals' experiences with lactation, chestfeeding, and gender identity: a qualitative study (<https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12884-016-0907-y?fref=gc>)

Adapted from an article first published by LLLGB – <https://www.laleche.org.uk/support-transgender-non-binary-parents/>
(<https://www.laleche.org.uk/support-transgender-non-binary-parents/>)

References

- 1 La Leche League International Bylaws, Section 1: General Purpose
- 2 <http://kellymom.com/bf/got-milk/transgender-parents-chestbreastfeeding/?fref=gc> (<http://kellymom.com/bf/got-milk/transgender-parents-chestbreastfeeding/?fref=gc>)
- 3 <https://www.lli.org/breastfeeding-info/milk-donation/#Milk> (<https://www.lli.org/breastfeeding-info/milk-donation/#Milk>)

IS YOUR CONCERN OR QUESTION NOT COVERED HERE?

Please contact a local La Leche League Leader (<https://www.lli.org/get-help/>) with your specific questions, or visit our Breastfeeding Support Online Community (<https://www.lli.org/get-help/breastfeeding-support-facebook-group/>).

Our FAQs present information on topics of interest to parents of breastfed children. Not all of the information may be pertinent to your family's lifestyle. This information is general in nature and not intended to be advice, medical or otherwise.

Medical questions and legal questions should be directed to appropriate health care and legal professionals.

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