



TEN STEP TUESDAY

FAQs about Transgender Breastfeeding

Adapted from information from Diana West, IBCLC

<https://dianawest.com/about/>

It's Ten Step Tuesday!

Q: Can trans men and others assigned female at birth breastfeed? Can trans women and other people assigned male breastfeed?

A: Yes. People who have nipples (whether or not they have breast tissue) may choose to breastfeed their babies. However, the amount of milk that they can produce varies according to many different factors, including gender assigned at birth and previous breast surgery. Some babies may not nurse readily from a breast/chest that has low or no milk flow. An at-breast supplementer can be used to increase the flow and provide supplemental donor milk or formula. Visit <https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12884-016-0907-y.pdf> for a qualitative study on this topic.

Q: What terms should I use when referring to a transgender or gender non-conforming parent?

A: The phrases used can be made more inclusive by substituting “parent” for “mother” or “woman.” Or simply using general inclusive phrases, such as, “Anyone preparing to breastfeed, or currently breastfeeding, or who has breastfed is welcome to use our lactation room,” and “Our meetings offer information, encouragement and support to all breastfeeding parents.”

Q: Should I use the term “breastfeeding” or “chestfeeding” when talking about male nursing?

A: This can vary from person to person, so it is always best to ask them, rather than to assume. In written literature, alternating between “breastfeeding,” “chestfeeding,” and “lactating” may work depending on the context. Another option may be “breastfeeding/chestfeeding.”

Q: What pronouns should I use when talking to a transgender or gender non-conforming person?

A: Ask them. Don't assume. You will save both yourself and them discomfort by simply asking in a friendly tone what pronoun you should use. It is not usually offensive to ask, but it could be very offensive to get it wrong. It's usually safe and respectful to use the terms “they” and “them” as gender-neutral pronouns (ignoring the old rule that “they” is only plural).

Q: Is there anything that could be offensive to a transgender person that I should know about?

A: Your intention not to offend a person usually goes a long way to ensuring that you won't say anything very hurtful, but there are a few common mistakes that you should be aware of. One phrase that can be offensive is “transgendered,” which is similar to saying the offensive term “colored” when referring to a person of African descent. And it is usually offensive to ask a transgender person about their birth name, genitals, or surgical goals. In all interactions with a breastfeeding transgender person, they should be treated with kindness, respect, and dignity, as everyone deserves.

Q: But what if I make a mistake?

A: It's ok! If corrected, take note, apologize, and correct. Don't dwell. Apologize and move on.

To learn more about ways to offer more inclusive care, read <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/bfm.2020.29152.rf>.

For more information contact

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