



LA LECHE LEAGUE  
Vlaanderen vzw

# LGBT Families and Breastfeeding

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## Declaration of conflicts of interest

I hereby declare that I have no financial ties of any kind with producers or distributors of breastmilk substitutes, feeding bottles or teats.



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## Wat is LGBT(IQ)?

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Intersexual
- Queer



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## Language

- Regional differences.
- Big differences how parents identify.
- **Do not assume, ask!**
- Everyone can make a mistake.
- Excuse yourself and do better next time.



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## Gender-neutral language

- Not always easy.
- Can be used in all publications.
- Lots of discussion about it.
- Respect for LGBT families versus empowerment of women.



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## Lots of variation

- How someone identifies?
- Does someone fit into one or more categories?
- How long ago someone came out of the closet?
- Where did the person grow up?
- How comfortable is the person with his/her identity?



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### Lots of variation

- Composition of the family.
- How would parents like to be addressed?
- How do they see their role as a parent?
- What are their biological options?
- How do they feel about it?



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### Lesbian couples

- Both can get pregnant.
- Often they do not know that they could both breastfeed.
- Not every lesbian has the desire to get pregnant.
- Not every lesbian has the desire to breastfeed.



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### Lesbian couples

- Not every lesbian identifies as a mother.
- A lesbian partner can provide great support.
- Choices the couple made before birth could be questioned once the baby is born.



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### Lesbian couples

- If only one parent breastfeeds, the other could get jealous feelings about the extra bonding time.
- If both parents breastfeed it can be challenging to regulate and maintain two milk productions.



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### Lesbian couples

- Who pumps when, who feeds when?
- What to do with the excess milk?
- What if the baby develops a preference?
- Next baby, different choices?



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### Gay couples

- Men are (partially) able to breastfeed/chestfeed.
- A man can use a supplemental nursing system while chestfeeding.
- Donor milk could be an option.



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### Bisexual couples

- Different options, depending on needs, wishes and biological features.
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding period can be emotional challenging.



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## Transwomen

- Transwomen are not able to get pregnant.
- They are able to breastfeed (partially).
- Breast enlargement could cause extra challenges, depending on the procedure.



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## Transwomen

- Glandular tissue grows slowly.
- The longer ago the transition took place the more glandular tissue will be available.
- Additional stimulation by medication and/or herbs is an option that can be discussed with the doctor.



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### Transmen

- Transmen can become pregnant if they temporarily stop testosterone therapy.
- They are able to breastfeed/chestfeed if they did not have their breasts removed (top surgery).
- After top surgery they are able to partially chestfeed.



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### Transmen

- Gender dysphoria can be a serious problem.
- Transmen are at risk to develop ppd.
- Mental health should be closely monitored.



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### Transmen

- Some like to breastfeed/chestfeed.
- Some accept it for the baby.
- Some do have to stop breastfeeding/chestfeeding due to gender dysphoria.



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## Transmen

- Sometimes little adjustments can help.
- Partially and carefully binding the breasts.
- Use of a low dosage of testosterone.



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## Intersex

- Options differ greatly depending on biology and surgery.



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**Induced lactation  
Re-lactation**

- Best outcome if started six month before the baby is born.
- Stimulation by medication and/or herbs is an option that can be discussed with the doctor.
- Regulating and maintaining two milk productions can be challenging.



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**Induced lactation  
Re-lactation**

- Growth of the baby has to be monitored closely.
- Supplements could be necessary.
- Some parents will choose donor milk.



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**Induced lactation  
Re-lactation**

- A supplemental nursing system could be used.
- Supplementing with a bottle could lead to breast refusal.
- If both parents feed the baby, the baby could develop a preference.



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### Additional problems

- Many parents struggle for years with their identity.
- Nobody who does not experience gender dysphoria can understand it.



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### Additional problems

- Discrimination
- Threats and even persecution in many countries
- Lack of knowledge
- Family problems



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## Additional problems

- Inadequate care
- Lots of paperwork
- Inhumane legislation
- Extra financial burden



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Both parents were pregnant. They co-nursed the first baby equally after a few weeks. The excess milk was donated. Around nine months the baby developed a preference.

The second baby gets a lot more milk by his gestational mother due to circumstances.



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For this couple it always was clear who would get pregnant and who would breastfeed. They were particularly annoyed by the overload of paperwork and the extra costs (adoption lessons, visit to a psychologist, ...)

They purchased several sperm samples of one donor, but until now the birth mother of their choice did not get pregnant again.

The other mom would especially like to have another child. She even thinks of getting herself pregnant.



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The father of these children came out of the closet after the birth of his third child. He identifies as transgender. He is only at the beginning of a long journey.

He did not know that transwomen are able to breastfeed. His wife is breastfeeding long-term. He is a stay-at-home dad. He fully supports breastfeeding, but feels often helpless when he is not able to comfort the children like mom does. But above all: **breastfeeding is something you do all together!**



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The children were born in 1995 and 1998. There was a large difference in age between the moms. The younger mom got pregnant.

Especially the non-birth mom often got weird comments. People just did not understand.

The kids never had problems. They were proud to have two moms.



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Both moms tried to get pregnant.

Only the gestational mom (left) is breastfeeding. The first weeks were challenging, but she had the full support of her wife.

They hope to have a second child and that the other mom (right) will soon get pregnant. Of course she is planning to breastfeed.



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**Do you feel uncomfortable when helping LGBT families?**

**Please find them someone who is happy to help LGBT families.**



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**WWW**

- LLL Leader Diversity Sharing Group:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/450424288427289](http://www.facebook.com/groups/450424288427289)
- Embracing Diversity in Reproductive Health, Birth, and Infant Feeding: [www.facebook.com/groups/613482658695915](http://www.facebook.com/groups/613482658695915)
- Reproductive health, birth, parenting:  
<http://www.therainbowbabies.com/index.html>
- Jaye Simpson, IBCLC:  
[www.breastfeedingnetwork.net/LGBTQ\\_Resources.html](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.net/LGBTQ_Resources.html)
- Milk Junkies, blog van Trevor McDonald:  
<http://www.milkjunkies.net>



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**Questions?**

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More information:



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