

What to Look for in a Nursing Bra

Written by [Laurel Haring](#) Sunday, August 17 2008 12:18

If you're planning to nurse, one piece of equipment that you'll need is a nursing bra. In fact, you'll need several of them. You'll have to decide what works best for you, but here are some things to keep in mind while you're shopping.

Once you've reached the last month or two of your pregnancy, it's time to start shopping for nursing bras. I don't know any woman who just loves to shop for bras, and a nursing bra has so many other points to keep in mind, the whole process can be overwhelming.

There are just a few points that you'll need to consider before you buy anything. Oh, and in case you're worried that your nursing bra is going to look like a cotton torpedo job from the 1950s, I can tell you that nursing bras have come a long way.

Your #1 Criterion: Fit

Your bra is something you wear for 12+ hours every day. You may have been able to get along with a bra that didn't fit right – or without a bra at all -- before you became pregnant. However, as a nursing mom, you'll truly need a bra that supports your breasts, fits your body correctly, and feels comfortable. Say no to bands that ride up, to straps and bands that dig in, and to cups that offer minimal coverage.

If you've never been fitted for a bra, you may want to consider it. This is one time in your life when you won't be able to say, "I've always worn a [insert size here] bra." If you're uncomfortable with the idea of a bra fitting, then google "nursing bra sizes" or "nursing bra fitting" for sites that will describe exactly how to measure yourself for a bra.

Your #2 Criterion: Comfort

It takes more than proper fit to make a bra comfortable. For example, you may have discovered during your pregnancy that you're living in your own perpetual heat wave. Wherever skin contacts skin, under your breasts, for example, there's going to be sweat, and you'll be very, very happy later if you invest now in bras made of breathable fabric, like cotton or microfiber.

Breathability is also important for keeping your nipples comfortable. If your nipples are constantly damp, as is going to happen if you wear, say, a bra made of nylon, your nipples are going to become tender. Tender nipples have the unfortunate tendency to become sore and painful, which can seriously interfere with nursing your baby.

In case you're worried that nursing bra = ugly bra, no worries. Nursing bras have come a long way in just the past 10 years. Want a nursing bra in lacy, sexy fabric? You can have one ... or two. You can find nursing bras in a variety of breathable fabric to sleep in,

engage in sports in, to wear under your t-shirts or strapless tops and dresses. There are even nursing bra tank tops.

Even if you decide to go with that good old standby, cotton, you'll need to be sure that the bra you buy will be able to adapt to the changing sizes of your breasts. Material that stretches or cup flaps that allow you to expand or decrease cup size will be your best choice early on, when the size of your breasts changes depending on whether you've just begun or ended a nursing session.

Your #3 Criterion: Ease of Use

You'll be holding a hungry baby who may not be too patient while you're unclipping, unsnapping, or otherwise uncovering your breast. So you'll want to be sure that whatever hardware your bra uses to open/close the flap is easy to use with just one hand. Some bras have a snap between the cups, while others have a fastening at the top of the cup, where the strap meets the cup.

Of course, if your bra is just stretchy material, you'll be able to just pull the cup fabric over or up. Small-breasted women should be aware that they may have actual cleavage while nursing and so shouldn't necessarily buy only stretchy bras. They're comfortable, but they may not offer the support and fit you'll need.

Other Important Considerations

Price

Prices for nursing bras start at about \$25. Your bras have an important job and should be looked at as an investment in your comfort. If you had to wear two pairs of shoes for the next six months, wouldn't you make sure that they were super comfortable and durable enough to withstand the wear and tear? Of course you would. Well, approach your nursing bra purchase with the same frame of mind. Your bras are going to be washed a lot, so they need to be durable. They're going to be worn a lot, so they'd better be comfortable and do their job (i.e., support your breasts). Buy the best you can afford. You can start with just three (one each for wear, wash, and wardrobe). You can always add more as you become more accustomed to what you like and what you don't like about your bras.

“Extras”

Some of us leak, and some of us don't. It's better to be prepared in case you're one of the former. You can buy disposable pads or washable cotton pads. In the long run, the cotton pads are more economical, and some think that they're more comfortable. You can always buy a very small supply of each and try them out before you make a larger purchase. The name of the game here is both to absorb leakage and keep your nipples dry.

Shoulder-strap pads can help in case you just love your bra but the straps aren't quite wide enough to comfortably support your breasts' weight. You can also find bra-strap extenders that'll give you just a bit more room around the ribcage, in case your pregnancy has left you with a larger circumference.

It All Boils Down to This

I attended a baby shower the other weekend and heard a new mother refer to her breasts during the early days of nursing as "rocks in socks." During those early days, before the baby and your body have settled into a nursing routine, you're going to be amazed at how large and heavy your breasts become. If you had small breasts BP (before pregnancy) this may be exciting. If you had large breasts BP, it may be too much of a good thing. Regardless, your newly expanded breasts need ample support. You need good fit and comfortable fabric. Your baby needs good fit* and easy access.

*Too-small bra cups can actually interfere with milk production.

While bra shopping may not be the most exciting shopping trip you make during your pregnancy, it certainly is an important trip. Happy shopping!

Laurel Haring is a writer and editor. She and her family live in Delaware. Laurel vividly remembers her nursing bras: white utilitarian cotton that took a beating yet were soft and superb "over-shoulder boulder holders."

<http://www.typeamom.net/what-to-look-for-in-a-nursing-bra.html>