

Your special time requires special lingerie.

It is important to have the proper bras during pregnancy to relieve breast strain and give needed support. Your breasts are made up of fatty and connective tissue, and glands. During pregnancy, each breast becomes 300 to 500 grams heavier due to increased fluid and mammary gland growth. This puts the surrounding skin and tissue under considerable strain. Without proper bra support, your breasts could become malformed, and for women with already large breasts, there can be significant tension in the neck and shoulders.

Maternity Bra vs. Nursing Bra - Many women use these terms interchangeably, but a maternity bra is very different from a nursing bra. A maternity bra is worn both before and after pregnancy if you are not planning on breastfeeding. The cups on a maternity bra are designed to be stretchy so that the bra can grow with your growing breasts. These bras also come with additional breast support.

A nursing bra (or feeding bra) is worn once your child arrives, and you have made the decision to breastfeed. The cups are designed to drop down from a clip, thus exposing your breasts for nursing. Nursing bras have an all-around breast support system to give a natural shape and provide much needed support.

When is the right time to buy a maternity bra?

The right time is as soon as your breasts begin to swell and your existing bras no longer fit. This is usually from the 4th month onward. Maternity bras are specially designed to give extra support. They are also made to fit comfortably on the first (tightest) hook early in your pregnancy, and adjust to the final (loosest) hook by your last trimester. However, it is not unusual for women to need a whole new size bra towards the end.

What features should I look for in a maternity bra?

A comfortable maternity bra should have wide side bands and shoulder straps to support growing breast tissue. Shoulder straps should have some cushioning and not stretch.

- Look for a bra with three or more back closures to offer the most flexibility in fit. A maternity bra should fit you on the tightest hook when you buy it - this will allow you to loosen the band as you grow.
- The bra's band should lie under the breasts and on the rib cage - not creeping up on the breast tissue. If the breast tissue is receiving pressure, this could lead to a plugged duct and ultimately mastitis or breast infection.
- Be sure the cup is large enough to give you adequate coverage and depth for your breasts. If the cup is not large enough for proper coverage, some of the breast tissue may spill out on top and under the arms resulting in inadequate support.
- If you will be pregnant during hot summer months, or you find yourself getting hot easily, look into bras made with cotton or wicking microfiber. And remember, you will be wearing these bras for several months after your baby is

born, so it's wise to buy a good bra that will adjust with your changing sizes.

Should my maternity bra be soft cup or underwire? Properly fitted underwires generally cause no problems during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. However, softcups are usually more comfortable when the breasts are at their fullest. This is during the last months of pregnancy and during the first month of breastfeeding. If you do choose an underwire bra, it is imperative that the wire fits well under and behind the breast tissue. Any pressure on the breast tissue can result in a plugged duct and ultimately mastitis or breast infection. Wearing an underwire while sleeping is not recommended.

When is the right time to buy a nursing bra?

Try and wait until about the 8th month to buy a nursing bra since your breasts should stabilize by the 7th to 8th month of your pregnancy. Then, buy one cup size larger than your measurement at 8 months. In general, this is how much a woman's breasts will increase once milk comes in after the birth. Do not wait until your baby is born to buy a nursing bra. There is too much going on in your life by then and you will benefit from having your nursing bra as soon as you start nursing.

Any special tips on a nursing bra?

- Look for a bra that provides convenient, easy access to the breast. A bra that allows the cup to be opened with one hand can be helpful when you're holding your baby and preparing to breastfeed.
- Choose a bra made of cotton or other smooth breathable fabric. Bras made with synthetic materials may trap moisture against your skin. Make sure that any decorative details (e.g. lace trim) are not scratchy and irritating to your skin.
- A bra with a four-hook back closure is going to offer you the most flexibility in fit.
- The straps should be wide, cushioned, and non-stretch for best support.
- The band of the bra should fit comfortably on its widest setting because after the birth, your band size will begin to decrease.

How much is my breast size going to change during my pregnancy? There is no standard answer. Some women change in size drastically and require several different bra sizes throughout their pregnancy, other women change very little until the baby arrives and milk production begins. Your best guess is to ask your Mother what her breasts did during her pregnancy. Immediately after the birth, you can expect a surge in your breast size as they begin to fill with milk. This can be painful. Establishing a regular feeding schedule will balance your milk supply and relieve any breast pain. After 2 weeks of nursing, your breasts should re-stabilize to about one cup size larger than your maternity bra size.

Why can't I wear regular bras throughout my pregnancy?

During and after pregnancy, your breasts undergo numerous changes. They are enlarging and becoming heavier and more sensitive. So, for late pregnancy and after delivery, choosing a bra that provides proper support can help you feel more comfortable and less fatigued. Normal bras simply aren't designed with

these issues in mind. However, having said this, there are every-day bras that could work as maternity bras. They just need to have stretchy cups and good support. Some women opt to wear sports bras as their maternity bras because they are designed to be super supportive.

How many maternity/nursing bras do I need?

Most recommend that you have at least three maternity/nursing bras so that you can wear a fresh one every day. One to wear, one to launder and one as a spare just in case....

What is the best way to put on a maternity/nursing bra?

Below I have described 3 techniques - you may pick any one of the three techniques, most importantly though, make sure your breasts are placed correctly into the bra. Your body should be bent over while doing this to allow the breasts to fill into the cups naturally.

Hook & spin method -

1. Wrap your bra around your waist and hook the closure in front of you. Make note of the location of the bra's label (e.g. side seam, back).
2. Turn your bra clockwise until the front of your bra is centered. This ensures that the excess on the adjustment flap lays flat against your back.
3. Bring bra up so that the bra band is resting directly under the breasts.
4. Slip the shoulder straps over your shoulders.
5. Run your finger along the area where the bra's label is to make sure it is lying smooth and flat against your skin.
6. Tug downward on the back of the bra so that it rests beneath the shoulder blades. The line of the bra should be horizontal from front to back.
7. Bend over at the waist and ease your breasts into the cups. One technique is to pull the band down and shake until the breasts fall into place. Another technique is to move the breast around with your hand until it is satisfactorily in the cup. Your nipples should be centered into the fullest point of the cup, and the cup should completely contain the breast. If your bra has a center seam, make sure your nipple is on the seam - this will reduce your nipples from showing.
8. Stand upright and visually check to see that your breasts are in the proper position.

Upside down hook & spin method -

It sounds strange, but I have an associate who swears by this method.

1. Wrap your bra around your waist inside out and upside down. Hook the closure. Make note of the location of the bra's label (e.g. side seam, back).
2. Turn your bra (in this technique it doesn't matter what direction you turn it) until the front of your bra is centered.
3. Flip the bra up so that the bra band is right side out and resting directly under the breasts.
4. Slip the shoulder straps over your shoulders.
5. Run your finger along the area where the bra's label is to make sure it is lying smooth and flat against your skin.
6. Tug downward on the back of the bra so that it rests beneath the shoulder blades. The line of the bra should be horizontal from front to back.
7. Bend over at the waist and ease your breasts into the cups. One technique is to pull the band down and shake until the breasts fall into place. Another technique is to move the breast around with your hand until it is



satisfactorily in the cup. Your nipples should be centered into the fullest point of the cup, and the cup should completely contain the breast. If your bra has a center seam, make sure your nipple is on the seam - this will reduce your nipples from showing.

8. Stand upright and visually check to see that your breasts are in the proper position.

Stretch & hook method -

1. Begin by slipping the straps over your shoulders. Make note of the location of the bra's label (e.g. side seam, back).
2. Bend over at the waist and ease your breasts into the cups. Your nipples should be centered into the fullest point of the cup, and the cup should completely contain the breast (with the exception of push-up and demi cup styles).
3. Hook the bra closure in back, and then stand upright.
4. Run your finger along the area where the bra's label is to make sure it is lying smooth and flat against your skin.
5. Tug downward on the back of the bra so that it rests beneath the shoulder blades. The line of the bra should be horizontal from front to back.
6. Visually check to see that your breasts are in the proper position.