

# Across continents and cradles: Breastfeeding practices around the world

Breastfeeding is a normal practice for birth parents and babies. Across different countries however, the concept of “normal” breastfeeding is shaped by a blend of cultural and physical dynamics. Read on for an overview of how babies are breastfed in Japan, Brazil, the U.K., India, and the U.S.

 **JAPAN**

54.7% of new parents in Japan breastfeed exclusively at three months, with 37.4% continuing to six months. In Japan, the Oketani method is a postpartum breast massage used by nurses to improve the quality of the breast milk and reduce pain. [Research shows](#) babies whose parents received Oketani massages were more likely to feed than babies whose parents only received verbal breastfeeding instructions.

 **UNITED KINGDOM**

Although almost [68% of new parents](#) in the U.K. start out breastfeeding, only 48% continue beyond six to eight weeks. This may be due to lack of awareness about how to encourage latching and decreased access to breastfeeding support in the NHS. [New parents](#) are reluctant to breastfeed in public because stigma around breastfeeding still exists.

 **BRAZIL**

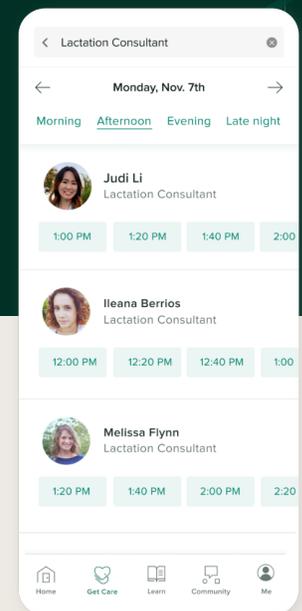
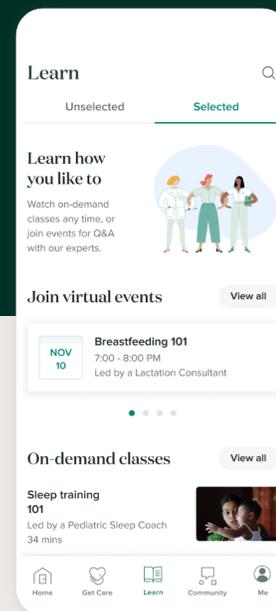
[71%](#) of new parents in Brazil breastfeed through their child’s first year of life. Brazil is considered the world leader in milk banking, when lactating parents donate their excess breast milk to help nourish infants in need. Today, [228](#) of the world’s 750 milk banks are in Brazil. Brazil also banned advertisements promoting infant formula.

 **INDIA**

More than half of [new parents](#) breastfeed in India, but it’s common to [throw out the colostrum](#), the first form of breastmilk released after giving birth. Colostrum is high in nutrients, antioxidants, and antibodies that are important for a newborn’s immune system and brain. Because of this belief, many new parents in India don’t start breastfeeding until two to four days postpartum.

 **UNITED STATES**

Most infants ([83.2%](#)) in the U.S. start out receiving breast milk—but by six months, 55.8% of infants breastfed at all and only 24.9% breastfed exclusively. People in the U.S. often think breastfeeding should be easy and “natural,” but American culture is extremely ill-equipped to provide people, especially Black new parents, with the acceptance and support they need to successfully breastfeed.



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