

Media Release



Health
South Western Sydney
Local Health District

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Dads encouraged to have the breast intentions this Father's Day

The thought of having breakfast in bed while unwrapping a pair of socks on Father's Day may be a moving experience for many first time dads. But with the gifts comes other responsibilities such as supporting their partner in breastfeeding their babies to give them a healthy start in life.

SWSLHD and NSW Kids and Families have collaborated to create a video encouraging Aboriginal fathers to support their partner in breastfeeding their babies. While a father can't breastfeed, his involvement in bonding, bathing and burping his child are just as crucial in their development.

SWSLHD District Director of Aboriginal Health, Nathan Jones said that fathers shouldn't feel left out of the process and that there are other ways to connect with their children.

"Dads can be supportive by bringing their partner some pillows, comforting the baby during the night and changing nappies when needed," Mr Jones said.

Babies not only reap rewards from the nutritious value of their mother's breast milk but also from the combined effort displayed from their parents working together.

"The Strong Fathers Group aims to support Aboriginal men to become positive role models within their families and communities, build parenting skills and make healthy lifestyle choices for themselves and their family." Input from the Strong Fathers group was critical in informing the development of the *Dads Know Breast Is Best* video.

"The early years of a child's life are important in every aspect of their physical, social and emotional development."

Breastfeeding is an important part of parenting in the early period of a child's life. The objective of the Strong Fathers Group is to build parenting skills over the entire life span. NSW Kids and Families Chief Executive Joanna Holt said that numerous studies have shown that if a partner is supportive, it increases a woman's confidence in breastfeeding and lengthens the time she breastfeeds.

"The National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines recommend that newborn babies should be breastfed exclusively until about six months with no other milk, food or drinks. After six months of age, babies can be introduced to solid foods while continuing to be breastfed," said Ms Holt.

Breastfeeding protects a baby against infections, childhood illnesses and the risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

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"It's wonderful to be able to partner with and support SWSLHD in developing this video resource on how fathers can support their partners in breastfeeding," said Ms Holt.

The *Dads Know Breast Is Best* video, which is available on You Tube, features dads whose families are engaged with SWSLHD's Aboriginal child and family programs. In recent years SWSLHD has extended its programs to increase the support to Aboriginal men who are fathers, carers or have a role in supporting the development of children. In partnership with Gandangara Health Services, SWSLHD support the Strong Fathers Strong Families Men's Group based at Liverpool.

To view the video, visit <http://bit.ly/1LCnSUh> or parents seeking extra help can contact their local Primary and Community Health Service or the Australian Breastfeeding Association on 1800 686 268 or visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au

For NSW Health information on breastfeeding visit
www.kidsfamilies.health.nsw.gov.au/publications/breastfeeding-your-baby/