



# La Leche League Canada

LLLC.ca

## **La Leche League Canada (LLLC) Background and History**

LLLC is a national organization of volunteers who provide information and encouragement to women who want to breastfeed their babies. LLLC is a charitable organization supported primarily by donations and memberships.

La Leche League International (LLLI) was founded in 1956 by a group of seven mothers in Illinois at a time when breastfeeding was rare. They felt that experienced breastfeeding mothers could provide the kind of practical, evidence-based help that newer mothers needed. From the beginning, they had a group of medical experts working with them to ensure the accuracy of the information they shared.

The first LLL meetings in Canada were held in the 1960's in Quebec. As LLLI grew in the U.S. and around the world, it also grew in Canada.

La Leche League Canada eventually became an independent organization affiliated with LLLI. The Canadian National Office is located near Ottawa. We produce some independent publications, revise LLLI materials for Canadian use and also use some publications directly from LLLI.

The name "La Leche" (pronounced La Lay-chay) means "the milk" in Spanish, and was adopted in part because the word "breastfeeding" was not acceptable at the time. The women who founded La Leche League tell how they chose the name:

In searching for a name for our new organization, we Founders were struck by the importance placed on breastfeeding by early Spanish settlers in America. In 1598, they dedicated a shrine to "Nuestra Senora de la Leche y Buen Parto" ("Our Lady of Happy Delivery and Plentiful Milk"). The words "happy delivery and plentiful milk" spoke profoundly of yearnings that are common to many mothers. Like women of old, we rejoiced in breastfeeding our babies and wanted to share our new found knowledge with others. Even though our name came from a religious shrine, we unanimously chose to be a non-sectarian organization from the start. To us, "La Leche" ("The Milk") became as much a symbol as a name. While it was chosen in part because the word "breastfeeding" was not acceptable at that time, in another sense our name's lofty origin reflected the importance we attached to the work we were undertaking.

La Leche League's beliefs are expressed through ten concepts – the La Leche League Philosophy:

- Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.
- Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply.
- In the early years the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food.
- Breast milk is the superior infant food.
- For the healthy, full-term baby, breast milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.
- Ideally the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the baby outgrows the need.
- Alert and active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.
- Breastfeeding is enhanced and the nursing couple sustained by the loving support, help, and companionship of the baby's father. A father's unique relationship with his baby is an important element in the child's development from early infancy.
- Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.
- From infancy on, children need loving guidance which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.

All La Leche Leaders have breastfed one or more babies themselves. They have an understanding of the complexities and joys of the breastfeeding relationship. This is an important factor in the accreditation process. La Leche League offers monthly Series Meetings that explore aspects of breastfeeding and provides a mother-to-mother support atmosphere. Therefore, a mother can go anywhere in the world and know she will receive consistent support and information.

Talking to other mothers with up to date information about breastfeeding and basic infant needs, helps to give mothers confidence. Correct information—even before her baby is born—can help a mother avoid common problems. La Leche League meetings provide a friendly place and an opportunity to share experiences.

La Leche League Leaders operate more than 160 La Leche League Canada Groups in communities across the country. Each Group holds monthly meetings where accredited Leaders facilitate informal, guided discussions. During these discussions mothers receive accurate, up-to-date and personalized breastfeeding information and support for their role as a breastfeeding parent. In addition, mothers are able to draw on the experience of other mothers who attend.

LLC Leaders also offer email and telephone help to nursing and pregnant women who call seeking breastfeeding information. To find the La Leche League Canada Group in your area, contact us online or in your local community: We are at [www.LLCC.ca](http://www.LLCC.ca).