



PROFILES & PLATFORMS

Enough With the Glamorous Breastfeeding Shots on Instagram
by Malwina Gudowska



[@mirandakerr](https://www.instagram.com/mirandakerr)

Photo: Courtesy of Miranda Kerr

After ten years together, my husband and I have reached a new level of intimacy. One day not long ago, he walked into the bathroom as I stepped out of the shower, took one look at my breasts, and yelled, “The milk is flowing! We need to bottle it right away!” He ran to the kitchen, grabbed two baby bottles, and put them under my nipples to catch the drips. I was leaking breast milk like a sieve.

After the birth of our first child, squeezing my breasts so hard it hurt would yield only a dribble of milk. My son was a ferocious feeder and was easily frustrated, so, before my milk came in, I hand-expressed the colostrum—the scarce thick first milk—from my nipples while my husband crouched under my breasts, catching each tiny drip with a syringe. It was humbling, time-consuming, and, apparently, still fresh in my husband’s mind. Here I was letting good milk go to waste.

Two months earlier, I’d paced the halls of London’s Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, trying to calm my two-day-old son’s frantic hunger screams. Amid the breastfeeding posters on the walls and photos of women demonstrating the perfect latch, one image stood out: a [print of an ethereal “selfie” Miranda Kerr](#) had taken and posted to her blog in 2011 while breastfeeding her then-one-week-old son, **Flynn**. Wearing a floral robe and faintly glowing, Kerr smiles at the camera as her newborn suckles at her breast.

I had been moved by the photo, taken by her then-husband **Orlando Bloom**, the first time I saw it and thought that one day I would like to replicate it, complete with a fancy robe or a lace-trimmed Elle Macpherson nursing bra. In the labor ward, however, as I tried to squeeze blood from a stone, I was angered that the hospital had decided that *this* was the image women had to live up to, women I could hear up and down the hallways crying along with their hungry babies.

At home a week later, as I still struggled to satiate my son, two more photos of breastfeeding models popped up on social media: **Natalia Vodianova** posted a black-and-white [image on Instagram](#) of herself in the nude, breastfeeding her one-month-old son, **James**, and model-turned-actor **Jaime King** also shared [a picture of herself](#), her son suckling with ease in a dimly lit room, smiling for the camera. And who could forget [the photo of a flawless Gisele Bündchen](#) nursing her daughter as she was pampered by multiple groomers?

Kerr, Vodianova, King, and Bündchen no doubt intend to normalize breastfeeding by posting these glamour shots. The caption on King’s Instagram reads: “Breastfeeding should not be taboo—and bottle feeding should not be judged—it’s ALL fun for the whole family.” But the truth is, for many women, breastfeeding is neither fun nor glamorous. And now, instead of real talk, we’ve got images of supermodel moms who make the first weeks of motherhood look as easy as striking a pose. It’s anything but.

There's a reason breast milk is referred to as "precious gold," and it's not just because of its health benefits for mother and child. For many, breastfeeding is one of the most difficult things a mother will do. Sometimes it feels more trying than being in labor. Not only must new mothers try to force a tiny new human to latch correctly, there's also mastitis, blocked milk ducts, and thrush to contend with.

Perhaps instead of posting glamorous breastfeeding shots, celebrities should share their horror stories. Let us hear how hard it was to get your baby to latch. Please, tell us about the mind-numbing pain of thrush, and how you had to apply Canesten to get rid of it. And then tell us it gets easier—because we need to hear it. Over and over.

Every once in a while, a self-deprecating celebrity does share a photo of the not-so-glamorous side of it. In my Instagram feed, that's author and actor **Jenny Mollen**, who had a baby boy with her actor-husband **Jason Biggs** five months ago. Mollen regularly shares images of breastfeeding or pumping milk in awkward positions and places—driving a car, on a bench under her camouflage T-shirt, at a book signing, on an airplane. Although Mollen hasn't said if she's struggled to breastfeed, at least we can relate to the images she posts.

But even **Mollen's recent posts**, particularly one of her pumping, elicited a few envious comments: "Production envy"; "jealous of your supply"; "#supplyenvy." The selfie showed Mollen with a bare, flat stomach, in skinny distressed jeans and a double-breast pump attached to her chest—and two bottles nearly filled to the top. If there's anything more infuriating to a new mother than seeing a perfectly coiffed model nursing her baby with ease, it's a photo of a woman showing off her abundant milk supply.

I still struggle some days to satisfy my eight-week-old baby with breast milk alone, and I regularly top up with formula when he's still hungry. There are still tears of frustration—his and mine—but I try not to let it bother me as much. As for the Elle Macpherson nursing bras, they are hanging in my closet unworn. I don't want to get breast milk all over the pretty lace.

August is National Breastfeeding month. Visit usbreastfeeding.org for more information.

Gisele Bündchen's having-it-all photo—what's wrong with this picture?