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Dear Sir /Madam,

The editor of Emaps parenting publications suggested that women in our mothers group send you some feedback regarding the WHO and breastfeeding. I am the mother of a 10 month old baby boy. My son was born 5 weeks premature and the only thing I was able to do to assist him in getting stronger was express breast milk for him to receive it through a nasal tube. He had his first "real" breastfeed at 5 days old and we went from strength to strength. Although he was fully breastfed he was given a dummy from the day he was born to encourage the sucking reflex. He was an excellent feeder but due to my complete exhaustion on many occasions I would express a night feed and my husband would give it to him in a bottle. At 4.5 months old I was advised that I had to give up breastfeeding for medical reasons, I was devastated and concerned for the backlash that was to come from people when they saw my baby bottlefed, but I knew a healthy mother was more important for my baby. By the time my son was 5 months old I was back at work 3 days a week and when he was 9 months old I commenced full time work.

I completely support breastfeeding however I have some real concerns with information I am hearing and seeing. Of the 15 women in my mothers group approximately 10 are back at work at least 3 days per week and a few of us full time. It is totally impractical for our babies to be breast-fed and the babies are thriving anyway. I was made to feel guilty because I didn't breastfeed my son for longer and that he would be at risk of picking up numerous infections. The fact of the matter is breastfed or not in childcare/mothers group they are going to pick up germs, breast-fed or not if they already have a pre-disposition to something like asthma they are going to get it. My son has had 8 bouts of bronchiolitis since he was born, three of those occurred when he was completely breast-fed. He is now an asthmatic but both my husband and I are also asthmatics. Of the many women I know who have babies the ones that suffered post-natal depression were the ones that could not breastfeed and this was not from trying, but the pressure they felt from society.

As a suggestion I think it is important that women are not sent home from hospital until they know how to breastfeed. In saying this the midwives and nurses need to be re-trained so that everyone understands attachment and you don't get told six different things during a nurses shift.

In addition to this it is extremely important for society to understand that the majority of women are now working mothers so workplaces need to accommodate breastfeeding mothers or even childcare in workplaces to even further help longer breastfeeding.

Education needs to be given to society that formula feeding is not bad for your baby and if you can't breastfeed, you can't breastfeed!!! End of discussion.

It is unfortunate that so many mothers feel like a failure because they cannot breastfeed this is where we are going wrong. Isn't it more important that the baby has a full belly, a smile on their face and is loved and nurtured??

Christine Stephens