

Submission no. 393AUTHORISED: 20/6/07 

Hi Pauline,

I hope I can help out a bit.

I am actually a successful breast feeder, but it took a long and painful time for it to work out for us.

I am on my third child now, so the stuff I am talking about applied to my first baby (I hope that is still OK).

Our problems started from the very first feed. Incorrect attachment led to bruises, and from then on it just got worse and worse. Bleeding during every feed, and a very unhappy mum and baby. When pregnant I did courses and read about b/f, but you really have no idea what to expect until you do it for the first time. I do believe that first time mums (and probably subsequent times, need a refresher course!) that you need a midwife/lactation consultant to sit there with you and stay for the entire feed. Before I say the next bit, I just want to say that I in no way blame the midwives for this as I know that they are incredibly busy and do not have the time to sit there and just help one person at a time. I had the experience of a midwife attaching the baby on to your boob and then leaving and then the baby would come off and there would be no one to help with re-attachment, so you would try and do it yourself and that is where the problems began. Even if you press the button for help, a different midwife comes in and tells you something completely different and then confusion compounds all the other things that you are feeling and experiencing.

I also think that because you leave hospital so early – usually before your milk has properly come in – the initial colostrum feeds are completely different to the gushing milk feeds of the first week or so. And that in itself brings in a whole host of other problems. Maybe if mums could stay in hospital until their milk has properly come in and then get real help with attachment and things, may be it would make life easier for a lot of new mums.

I went to a lactation consultant when my baby was 2 weeks old, but it was far too late really, as all the damage had been done, but as I was still very bruised and sore it did help. But I really wish that along with the physio visits and all the other visits you get in hospital, that a genuine lactation consultant could visit and spend time with new mums and dads during a feed.

I guess you are just (well I was anyway) feeling very vulnerable, overwhelmed and inexperienced when your first baby arrives. And you are just bombarded with conflicting advice and opinions, that you have no idea who to trust, believe or follow. It would really help if all the midwives were given guidelines on teaching breast feeding, so they all told you and helped you in the same way. Maybe that would empower new mums, rather than disempowering and making it all seem so much harder.

I have known women who have had absolutely no problems, and I have known others who didn't even try, and other like me who have found it very hard, but persevered, and others who have struggled and then given up very quickly. But most of the mums I have talked to have all said that different midwives all telling you different things each time was very confusing and upsetting.

It took us 3 weeks to really get the hang of breast feeding together, and then we continued happily until he was ready to stop. My second baby took us a couple of weeks for it to stop hurting, and my third baby just a week – so it has become easier each time.

I was so close to stopping with my first baby each time we fed. I used to cry every time because it hurt so much. I even went to the extreme of only feeding him every four hours because I just couldn't bear doing it, even when I knew he was hungry and needed it way before that. Thankfully he hasn't held that against me in his later years!!!

I hope this information has been of help to you, I am rather passionate about this subject because it was such a struggle for me, but I also knew how vitally important it was for my babies to breast feed, that I just couldn't give up, I just trusted that it would eventually get better and it did, and I was so glad that I didn't switch to formula.

5/06/2007

If I can be of any further help let me know.

Hollie Richards