

**Submission no. 444**AUTHORISED: 20/6/07 *B*

**Subject:** Submission for 'Inquiry into the health benefits of breastfeeding'

To Whom It May Concern,

I am interested in contributing to this inquiry, outlining the experiences and thoughts of a mother that did not successfully breastfeed her infant past one month of age.

Before my son was born, I had no relationship or friendship with anyone that has successfully managed to breastfeed their infant for more than 3 months. These experiences of unsuccessful breastfeeding that were shared with me, tended to normalise the use of infant formula in my mind.

When my son was born, he was successfully put on the breast 15 minutes after birth, but that was probably the only thing that was done correctly. The midwives did not appear to have the time to instruct and assist me with attaching my son, and in hindsight I realise they did not encourage me to attach anywhere near as frequently as I should have been.

I also had issues of being so embarrassed and out of my comfort zone, that I could not even attempt to breastfeed in front of family and friends when they came to visit my new son and me.

Both of the previous examples mentioned influenced me to not attach my son to the breast frequently enough to encourage my milk to come in.

As my milk had not come in by day 2, a midwife suggested to me that my son was starving and needed a formula top up. I refused at first, but then agreed a little while later as my son would not stop crying. The formula settled him instantly, and the next time he was hungry it became all too easy for me to ask for more formula, as my milk still had not come in.

I went sent home from hospital on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after birth, my milk still had not come in, and I was unsure on correct attachment procedures and positioning my son for breastfeeding.

Being a first time young mother (at 20 years old) the stress of entering motherhood was extreme for me, and without any other support from the hospital once I had arrived home, it was much easier for me to continue with bottlefeeding. My milk did not arrive until day 5, and I did make serious attempts for the first week afterwards to attach my son, however by this stage he was refusing to attach as he was so used to the bottle. I made a desperate call to Riverton, and a midwife came out to visit me. When she saw my son not attaching (screaming his refusal at the breast), she said there was nothing else she could advise me to do.

Thus I went out and bought a breast pump, and was able to give my son expressed EBM for about one third of all of his feeds. I gave up the pumping after a month as it was just too hard and tiring (using a manual pump). Had I been aware or been told about electric pumps being available for hire, perhaps I could have continued expressing for longer.

I have since joined an online parenting community, where I have had the pleasure of reading many women's incredible journeys and experiences – including journeys relating to their breastfeeding experiences. The knowledge I have gained from being a member in this online community is far more than I gained from any health professional in regards to how best to feed my son. This knowledge has now given me the power and confidence that I will be able to succeed at breastfeeding my next child successfully.

I hope that the government seriously considers some new initiatives to encourage breastfeeding in our society, so that the amount of mothers with a similar story to mine will decrease significantly.

I think there is a severe lack of public awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding. There are many mothers I know of out there who believe that infant formula is as good as breast milk, or at least very nearly as good as, and this is just not the case! I would love to see some sort of national health campaign, to help normalize breastfeeding within our society, by making it easier for women to work and breastfeed, and breastfeed in public, without feeling isolated and unsupported.

I also think there should be a lot more education of health professionals about the benefits of breastfeeding, and how to support a breastfeeding mother. I have heard some horror stories about Maternal Child & Youth

Health Nurses, who are very unsupportive of a mothers' breastfeeding relationship with her child, and who try to push solids and formula when they clearly are not needed. I also believe Midwives should have more extensive training, similar to lactation consultants, as they are in a very influential and important position to promote and educate about breastfeeding, as they are with a mother and her newborn in those first few crucial days.

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