

Hi,

I understand that you want to know about some of the problems relating to breastfeeding. I went into pregnancy with the firm belief that breastmilk is the only food that newborns should have. I have a biology degree and a strong interest in nutrition and as far as I am concerned breastmilk was the right food. On a scale of one to 10 with water at 1 and breast milk at 10, I rank formula about a 3 on the scale. I still believe this. As my family has a history of mental illness, I wanted to do everything possible to provide my children with the best possible protection against that.

So I can tell you how disappointed I was with my own experiences.

Some history: my mother had died 2 years before I had my baby, and my mother-in-law had bottle-fed both her children. I had no breastfeeding resources within my family circle.

My first daughter was born at Royal Prince Alfred hospital via the public system. She was born via emergency casearean as she was 4.95kg, and I was put in a shared room. I could not get private health cover to cover me as my pregnancy was a surprise. Even though I had been in the private health care system since I was ~13 years old, I could not get a private room, even though I had relatives willing to pay for that for me. She was born with tongue tie. This is where her tongue was attached to the bottom of her mouth all the way along her tongue. In the past, my understanding is that the hospital would simply arrange to snip it and there would be no further issue, however for some unknown reason this is now as controversial as circumcision. My husband had tongue tie when he was born and was instantly treated as a newborn.

My daughter could not breastfeed without causing me extreme pain, as she could not get her tongue over her gums to protect my nipples. As the hospital would not treat it, I was left to pump breastmilk and supplement with the hospital formula. I was pretty much left to my own devices to do this, and as I was not expecting any issues, I was completely overwhelmed. I was left to negotiate the world of breast pumps & bottles and how much to supplement my daughter pretty much on my own. I was (in hindsight) in a bad way.

The hospital lactation consultant wrote me a referral for a paediatrician. However the first appointment that I could get was in 2 months. None of the hospital paediatricians would assist me. When I left the hospital, I was completely at a loss as to what to do. I remember via distinctly standing in a chemist thinking how am I going to feed this baby. I had no idea what formula to buy, what bottles to buy, how to get a breast pump. The hospital had told me to ask the chemist for the hire of an electric breast pump. We ended up calling all over the Inner West on that first day trying to find an electric breast pump. I had to pump every 4 hours. I had to feed my baby that milk, and then top it up with formula. For every feed I had to pump, store, sterilise 2 bottles, make formula, feed my baby breast milk, and then formula. The whole process would take about 4 hours by which time my baby was awake again. I had no sleep.

After 4 weeks of pumping and get steadily more distressed, my husband insisted that I see my GP.

My GP spoke with the paediatrician and determined that he would only have been able to refer me to a paediatric surgeon (ie entailing another delay), so my GP arranged for me to see immediately a paediatric surgeon. The paediatric surgeon explained the risks to us, and immediately treated my daughter, by snipping her frenulum.

I tried to breastfeed for another week, but my daughter had learnt bad habits, so I consulted a private lactation consultant, Dale Hansson, who was excellent. I found her through the Australian Lactation Consultants Association webpage. She assisted me and gave me my confidence back. She also referred me to a speech pathologist who specialised in eating &

drinking issues, who I went to see. With their tips and assistance I was able to get breastfeeding working by the 8 week mark (2 months). I then successfully breastfed until 8 months when I discovered I was pregnant again. My GP, advised me to stop breastfeeding. This, in hindsight, was the wrong advice, as I had not been feeling morning sickness. When I stopped breastfeeding, I suddenly felt morning sickness and that continued for a few more months. I also got antenatal depression which continued onto postnatal depression with my second child, as I felt that I had not been able to have the relationship with my first child that I wanted to have. Then 2 months later I took a trip to the USA with my 10 month old daughter, and the formula feeding experience on the planes & airports was a nightmare. Formula companies in Australia do not sell liquid formula, so it was necessary to take my own water and formula sachets and make them up on the plane. I very much wish I had continued breastfeeding. On my return I purchased liquid formula in the USA, but unfortunately my daughter refused the bottles that it came in, so she had no milk the entire 20 hours that we were in transit.

Issues:

1. Paediatricians & lactation consultants in hospitals need a better understanding of tongue-tie. They need to understand the severe problems it can cause to breastfeeding, the breastfeeding relationship & the speech problems it can cause later. Intervention in my daughters case would have saved me 2 months of pumping & trying to feed my daughter on cracked nipples. 2 months doesn't sound like a lot, but when you are living every hour of those long 24 hour days, it's equivalent to more like 4 months of an average person's life.
2. Paediatricians & lactation consultants in hospitals need a better understanding of nipple shields. This would also have assisted me during the painful period of waiting for a paediatric surgeon.
3. Conflicting advice in hospitals does not help. Only the lactation consultant should give breastfeeding advice, and ideally create a working plan for each mother.
4. My GP advising me to stop breastfeeding while I was pregnant with my second was the wrong advice. Internet research indicated to me that I could have continued breastfeeding and probably should have for my eldest child's best health. This would also have saved me stress during my overseas trip.
5. While this is not directly related to breastfeeding, it would be extremely helpful if liquid formula was available in Australia. Not only would it have helped in relation to my overseas trip, but there is more accuracy in the quantities and would have been helpful during the horrible first 8 weeks when I was supplementing. I didn't feel like I could go anywhere because I always had to take some method of making milk with sterile water. This did not help my generally anxious state.
6. I would have gone to the ABA when I was pregnant with my first child. I didn't know where I could get an electric breast pump. I was not prepared at all. I could not reach the ABA on their helpline and did not know how to get to a meeting, as my local Early Childhood Nurse did not know how to hook me up with them except through their helpline. Their helpline was always busy. I wish that the midwives in RPA had suggested joining ABA prior to having my baby. They were my main source of information, as all I had was them, and "Up the Duff" by Kaz Cooke, which was my bible.
7. I discovered www.kellymom.com during my trials and tribulations and found it to be an exceedingly helpful resource for breastfeeding. I wish that there had been something easily available to me when my daughter was first born or when I was pregnant.
8. I wish that it had been explained how DIFFICULT it is to pump at work. I went back to work full-time for 6 months, when my second child was 6 months old during which I pumped breastmilk. This worked fine until I got sick due to stress and my milk dried up. I kept trying to get it working but in the end my son refused the breast and insisted on the bottle. I was fortunate to work for a company that assisted me with pumping milk. They arranged a private room for me with a microwave & a fridge. However, funnily enough I had to use bits & pieces from various bottle companies in order to get everything going. I used a Pigeon sterilising bag, an Avent pump, Pur self-sterilising bottles.
9. I think that formula should be prescription only. And it should be prescribed by doctors only after they have confirmed that the mother has

seen or is going to see a lactation consultant. That would mean that mothers would breastfeeding problems would be encouraged to keep seeing their GP with issues. I wasn't used to going to the GP all the time, and felt like I was being a pest.

10. I don't think that Stage 3 formula should be allowed to be advertised. 11. A better understanding is needed in the general populace, especially men & the older generation about what formula doesn't provide to babies. It's not about the benefits of breast milk. It's about the gaps in formula. Human babies are supposed to get breastmilk. That's how our brains, bodies, immune systems are wired.

12. I have a theory, not currently backed up by science, but of my own anecdotal experience that one of the reasons for the high ADD/ADHD issues in our society today is because of the introduction of formula. The lack of OMEGA-3s in previous formula milks could have produced entire generations of people with ADD/ADHD. I would love to see a study investigating this.

13. There are not enough free resources when you are pregnant. When I was pregnant I was desperately trying to find out information, and there was so little available. Nobody points them out for you. Literature in the hospital was out of date. I was given leaflets with "Nursing Mothers Association" and the wrong telephone number.

I wish it had been made easier for me. With my second, as soon as I started having problems, I went straight to Dale Hansson and she helped me enormously.

I was one of the first of my cohort of friends to get pregnant and every single one of them I have advised to join the ABA before having the baby. I also advise them to check out www.kellymom.com.

I hope this is of some use to you, and I am more than happy to explain in further detail. For your reference my daughter is now 2.5 yrs old, and my son is 18 months. Tis is very recent history.

Heidi Hendry