

MC

Hello there

I am emailing this as requested in relation to the parliamentary enquiry. This is copied from a forum and is a few posts combined so it may read a bit odd.

I have done my own submission but without much of the detail.

MY STORY

I didn't consider really that I would have problems breastfeeding when I was pregnant with my first, was very confident and looked forward to being able to.

As it turned out, I had no problem (despite having to deal with hospital midwives "helping" HA!) He would be happily sucking away and one would wander over "Oh, he's not attached properly" and want to pull him off. I'd be saying - no, he is. I would almost have to have an argument before she would look from another position and then say 'oh, sorry, you're right, he is". And it goes on. Sometimes I look back and wonder if I ever would have breastfed him had I not been so confident in my own ability and instincts, and stood up to them.

At about 3.5 mths I had to make a very difficult decision and stop b/f due to dreadful insomnia problems and the snowballing effect it was having on our existence. I can clearly remember sitting on the bed looking out the window and bracing myself against my grief, telling myself that I had given my all and 3.5 mths was a great effort considering what I was up against and there was a whole lot more to a happy & healthy mum & bub (v, supportive dad too!)

We never looked back and although I will always feel sad that it wasn't to be, I tell myself at least I was able to manage for 3.5 mths and enjoyed what I could of it.

When pregnant with baby 2, I was not worrying about it, it had all worked out fine us going onto formula and I was looking forward to b/feeding again.

Well, it never entered my head that I would ever have trouble with the 2nd feeding wise. I put her on and she never ever sucked properly from the first feed. She would fuff about and not get on, I couldn't work out what her problem was. Sometimes she would latch on and do 2 beaut sucks, then she would be off again. Screaming, screaming, screaming.

I had an elective c/section with her and a very happy first day aside from the feeding, but was burdened with inexplicable pain for the next few days, exacerbated by excruciating cramps in my neck/shoulders from the endless hours struggling to get her to attach. No-one could tell me what was wrong, each new shift of midwives would go through the patronizing approach that it was just position etc. etc. Despite me telling them not to, they would grab her head, my boob and try to ram the 2 together which would cause her to scream in pain every time as she had a really sore ear from the birth and no-one would listen when I would tell them it was sore and not to touch it.

I had loads of milk and could have fed 6 children each time so supply wasn't a problem that way, although it caused other problems. Sodden beds at night, I would go through 2 towels with every feed padded around my boob to catch the overflow. Soaked shirts and bras etc. I kept the breast pad companies in business.

She was not able to attach so while at hospital I pulled out the nipple shields, well didn't that cause a problem. Not with me or baby (who are the only ones who counted after all) but I was getting lectures and horrendous pressure put on me not to use them. They made me see a lactation consultant who could not tell me any reason not to use them other than it would make my milk disappear?? How? I had used them before with no problem and it was obvious I had masses of milk, and my babies weight was plummeting. They applied so much pressure and stressed me out so much at probably the most vulnerable state I have been in in my life that I caved in and persevered in agony without them while the weight kept dropping

and baby kept screaming.

I stayed in hospital 6 days and by the end I had chosen to trust my own judgement and ignore the unhelpful advice and use nipple shields from then on. I was sent home with a lactation consultant on my back pressurising me about using them. but with no explanation of why she could not attach.

It turned out she had a tongue tie and I was told by another midwife that is why she can't attach properly. I took her to the paed and he told me that she had a small one, it was completely unrelated to the sucking problem and the reason she could not attach is that she did not use all parts of her tongue. She used the front and back but not the middle or something to the effect.

This was at 4 weeks and she completely perked it once I stopped stressing about the shields and used them. It was either that or formula, simple as that. Being able to use the nipple shields meant that I fed her myself for as long as I did.

The other problems I had feeding her were that she was feeding every 2 hrs at times and taking 2 hrs to fed. Completely unworkable. It went like this : feed would start, happy sucking, massive let down (much more painful than with 1st baby), she would be taking big breaths and swallowing but would not take a break to breathe out EVER so would swallow the air, instant stop to feed, her screaming, me trying to wind her with milk squirting in every direction. And so it would continue, I would try getting her off to make her breathe but I could never get it to work.

The end resolution to that problem was stopping feeding at breast and expressing and feeding from the bottle. This was far less distressing to us both and I was able to control it quite well and get it out of her mouth and let the breath out in a more regular way which helped massively but didn't 100% fix it. The only trouble was that with the expressing my supply gradually dwindled and I would find myself sitting hearbroken at every session looking at decreasing amounts in the bottle. It was quite a lot compared to what most people would get really but not enough for her, a very hungry baby.

Another problem I had was her poo. B/f baby poo smells sweet but it always seemed a diarrhea kind of smell to me and she had dreadful colic from around 4 weeks to 6mths old I spent 4 hrs every night rocking back and forward in the chair frantically cuddling her tight. My 1st had colic too and I would sit there feeling sorry for her and telling myself it would improve at 3 mths. It was about 4.5 mths before I realised I had been kidding myself! I took her to dr and test was done on the poo and the conclusion was that because she fed so much, she had too much lactose (I think that was it anyway) and when that happened it had that kind of effect on the bowel, an excess.

Also, my experience with both my babies and her especially was that there was no way on the face of the earth they were going to feed on milk solely till 6 mths. I honestly think that is a bit of a joke to make such a sweeping generalisation as a rule of what should be happening. I have many witnesses of a particular evening when we were all having pizza and she was screaming blue murder, despite being fed and cuddled. It became very obvious that she wanted pizza. She was just 3 mths old. I held a piece of crust to her mouth like you would for a 6 or 7 mth old as a rusk, but that wasn't what she wanted, she wanted the part with the SAUCE! She carried on till she got that in her mouth and was gobbling on that like her life depended on it. Of course, I didn't let her eat it but we were all gobsmacked. It was completely unthinkable to be eating and not feeding her food, she went ballistic. So I started with baby rice with milk etc at that age and that helped.

Also, my sister had a very difficult 2nd baby that never stopped screaming for more than 1/2 an hr at a time for the first 8 weeks until someone said she needed carbohydrate and to give her some rice. She changed into a different baby from the day they did it.

Anyway, the end result was that I was only able to manage to feed my 2nd for 3 mths before the breast milk ran out. I could have sat from dawn to dusk pumping relentlessly to try and keep my milk up but it was impossible to feed her, continue life and manage to do that.

I find it really hard and really insulting when I see people from breastfeeding associations and the like making very hurtful statements such as "I don't know why anyone would bottle feed when you can breastfeed." It makes me sad for my friend who desperately wanted to breastfeed but had nothing but blood coming from her nipples to hear statements such as "anyone can do it, it's just depends how committed you are".

I think in a perfect world, every mother would love to be able to breastfeed. But, we are humans and as diverse in our experiences and makeup as nature itself, unfortunately we don't just fit into a mould. And I think assisting mothers to breastfeed has a long, long way to go. Starting with midwives and lactation consultants in hospitals perhaps.

Anyway, this is just an outline of the experience I have had, I wonder if anyone has had any similar.

The forceful let down wasn't the problem with attaching. She couldn't attach from the very start when my milk was plentiful but not coming out forcefully. With my first it did cause a problem at times in that when he would pause to let the breath out, he would get squirted good and hard in the throat, which would then cause him to cough and splutter, poor bub. But it was minor and we would get him straightened out and back on no problem.

Yes, the excessive feeding may have caused the colic, it wouldn't surprise me, as the dr said that was causing the smelly poo. My first had colic though and it seemed to be just one of those things that are inexplicable, could be this, could be that. But it gradually dissipated at around 3 mths with him.

When I went to the paed about the tongue tie etc, I was asking for it to be cut on the advice of a friend who said my baby would not be able to lick icecream etc when she is older among other things if I didn't get it cut. The paed was very scathing and said cutting it is unnecessary. He also said it had nothing to do with the attachment problem. whether this is true or not is debatable. It was 3 yrs ago now.

So it wasn't cut and my daughter has no problem poking her tongue out and literally inhales icecreams. We think her cousin has the same state of tongue extension, but she had no problem attaching when b/fed.

It's just a shame that the lactation consultant I was directed to in effect just read the text of the book (in Breastfeeding Naturally, where it says nipple shields lead to decreased supply), without addressing what was really going on. If she had, it could have saved me months of hellish pain as she would have correctly diagnosed that it was important for me to use the nipple shield.

I did the thing with the speech therapist too (remembering now) pulling the tongue out and all that, what a joke. I could never get hold of her tongue and she just got really distressed. It just upset us both.

Memories coming back now, I used to try and play games with her all the time poking tongues out and so on.

MY IDEAS ON IMPROVING BREASTFEEDING RATES

1. Extremely important to make enormous effort to **lose the breastfeeding nazi image!** I cannot emphasize this enough.
2. Provide the support required to make breastfeeding possible. Pressure and encouragement on mothers to breastfeed is worse than useless when the support system is **appalling**. It is the height of cruelty to impose these enormous expectations on mothers without providing the means for them to achieve it. Providing more support would include:
 - only **highly qualified experienced people to instruct mothers about breastfeeding**
 - funding for more highly qualified lactation consultants
 - post natal care **in the womans home for 6 weeks after birth**. Look at the NHS in the UK. Our care is disgusting compared to the NHS in terms of post natal care for women
 - funding for **breastfeeding cafes**. Again, look at the NHS. Unfortunately the ABA has such a poor public image, women are far too apprehensive to utilize its enormously valuable resources.
 - funding for a **24hr helpline and in home consultations**

Breastfeeding belongs to **all** women. It is their right to choose if they want to do it, how they want to do it and how long they want to do it for. The shameful situation at the moment in Australia is that breastfeeding is almost becoming a niche style of parenting, associated with parenting styles that many women do not wish to follow. There is the strong perception in the community that a certain section of the community "own" breastfeeding. Unfortunately the passion and zeal of some promoting breastfeeding are actually doing the opposite and causing breastfeeding to be seen in negative ways.

I've a lot more I could say about ways I can see to improve the ability of women to breastfeed and how to promote it within the community. I will just make a few comments about my main ideas of how I see breastfeeding should be promoted:

- cease telling women they should breastfeed via the media – they get the message loud and clear. This simply has to stop when there is a dire lack of support in place for them to achieve this

- discuss both common and unusual problems with breastfeeding and how they can be resolved regularly in the media
- cease deriding formula in the media
- promote support methods regularly in the media

I hope I am not too late with this information and hope it is of some benefit.