

Preparing for Parenthood Course Summary 3

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding should be easy and straightforward, babies instinctively want to suck and mums instinctively cuddle their babies to their breasts. But it is a new skill to learn for everyone, especially for adults who have not seen many women breastfeeding. If it doesn't go well it can be painful and upsetting. Happily most problems are quickly and easily solved with help and common sense.

How breastfeeding works:

There are two main things that make breastfeeding work hormones and positioning to make it easy for the baby to feed. Breastfeeding is driven by all the same hormones as birth and love-making (oxytocin) and prolactin (known as the “care taking hormone”), so atmosphere, security, comfort and relaxation is just as important when feeding the baby, to help the oxytocin flow.

Prolactin makes the calories and fluids that mum eats and drinks into milk. Then oxytocin stimulates milk “let down” – contracts the muscles around the milk duct so they squirt the milk out of the nipple to the baby. The suckling of the baby stimulates more oxytocin and more prolactin, producing more milk. Thus the more the baby feeds the more milk is produced for the future.

It is very important that the baby is in a comfortable position to feed, without their head turned sideways (*tummy to tummy and head and spine in line*), and that they have the nipple far back in their mouth (*a good latch*). If the nipple is too far forward in the baby's mouth it will rub and become sore. If the baby has to turn and stretch to reach the nipple it is hard for them to get enough breast in their mouth for the nipple to be well protected. It is also uncomfortable for them to swallow. The printed sheets will help remind you of the latch and the positions you can try.



Breastfeeding works best when mothers have a lot of support, both practical and emotional. There are times when mums need a lot of reassurance that they are doing it right and that the baby is thriving. They also need a lot of food and drinks, readily available. If fathers feel left out there are lots of other things they can do to help.

Remember also

Mum feeds the baby, dad feeds the family

Biological nurturing

As the whole family are all learning how breastfeeding works best for them during the first 48 hours it really helps if this can be a stress-free time.

Consider keeping the baby in very close contact with mum or dad (ie in arms a lot of the time) so that you can learn their early feeding cues and respond quickly each time. The baby will not take in much colostrum or milk at each feed, but each time the baby latches on to the breast in a calm quiet fashion that is a really positive learning experience for everyone. The babies won't want to keep on feeding that often for long – in the early days it is partly because their stomach can only hold about 5-15ml of milk (a spoonful) so they do need to feed little and often, but also because they are looking for comfort and reassurance that they are safe, and suckling does that very effectively. Both positions and feeding cues are suggested on the pink Biological nurturing handout.

Problem solving

The most common problems with breastfeeding are sore nipples, engorgement and mastitis. These, and other problems can usually be easily and quickly solved. If any of you do have any difficulties please get in touch either with me or one of the breastfeeding councilors associated with the BCT (all of whom speak English).



I attach a summary of these and other common problems and solutions *BF problems and suggestions*.

Further information, films etc

You may want to have a look at the following website, which includes a excellent film demonstrating good positioning and latching on as well as problem solving

<http://www.bestbeginnings.info/best-beginnings-for-parents>

For a pictorial guide to expressing, one site is

<http://www.breastfedbabies.org/article.aspx?aId=16>

Also offering a lot of information about expressing and storing milk, for example when going back to work is:

<http://www.llli.org/NB/NBJulAug07p168.html>

The La Leche. site has a lot of useful information and problem solving solutions.

<http://www.llli.org/>

I also attach some scanned documents relating to infant feeding...my apologies that each document is spread across two separate PDFs, my scanner is refusing to allow me to save them as a single document. These include "Care of your nipples when breastfeeding" and "Fathers and breastfeeding". I hope they will be helpful.

Most health insurance companies give a reward (vouchers or money off insurance) for mother's who breastfeed for a certain length of time. Check with your insurance company to see if yours does.



Nursing Bras

Here are a few websites which many people use for ordering nursing bras online.

www.bellefiore.com

<http://www.figleaves.com/uk>

and

<http://www.bravadodesigns.com/home.asp>

I enclose a handout produced by Bellefiore on how to ensure a nursing bra fits properly. You can have personal fittings through Bellefiore or at some of the other lingerie shops in Basel, such as Nina Dessous. You can contact Belinda for a private bra fitting, or to see any of the gorgeous baby stuff in her shop.

For simple, cotton, inexpensive nursing bras (particularly good for the first weeks when you may need quite a range of sizes) try H&M, or the drugstores DM or Mueller in Weil am Rhein in Germany.

