

Submission no. 378

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I have had 2 children. With my first daughter I was convinced on the benefits of breastfeeding. She was diagnosed with oesophageal reflux at 6 weeks and I was told that although breastfeeding was best, a thickened formula might help her. After a strained relationship with NO support from anywhere (our child health nurse at that time said formula may help her), I decided to wean her onto the formula. A month after her last breastfeed I realised that she was no different. Her reflux had not changed due to the introduction of formula.

In her first year of life she had 3 ear infections, 2 bouts of tonsillitis and allergic reactions to cows milk when introduced on its own. She also suffered with gastroenteritis twice. After reading about the benefits of breastfeeding I can honestly say that she most likely wouldn't have had to go through all those illness' at such a young age if I had understood more about the benefits of breastfeeding a reflux baby.

With my second child, at 6 weeks she started developing signs of reflux similar to my first daughter. I went to the GP who offered medication for reflux but not much more advice. I hired a private lactation consultant who encouraged me to continue breastfeeding and to investigate food intolerances. After going on an elimination diet my daughter's signs of reflux disappeared. At that time I had been giving 1 formula bottle of goats milk formula when we had problems with breastfeeding... when we stopped the goats milk formula all symptoms disappeared.

When my daughter was younger I phoned the MCHN child health line for help and advice as I was distraught. I was asked if I breast or bottle fed and I said breast. The next phrase was "she isn't getting enough milk, I should top her up with formula" I was astonished that without taking a thorough history or even understanding why I was upset she was immediately blaming breastfeeding on an unsettled baby.

Later in the time frame of her life (around 3 months) I took her to a paediatrician to have a thorough check over with her. He said she was a fussy baby and would be helped with starting solids early & formula. Once again I was astonished with the information given which was so out of date & out of line compared to the WHO recommendations and literature given to me about breastfeeding in the hospital.

When she was 6 months I took her for vaccinations and discussion with our GP who asked how she was fed & I said breastfeeding and he said he thought with her food intolerances she should probably not be weaned yet. I was once again shocked at the information, weaning at 6 months? I thought the least amount of time for breastfeeding was 12 months, not 6 months and according to WHO 2 years.

I got very conflicting advice from health professionals whom I listened to with my first daughter and suffered with, but my second daughter has benefitted greatly by breastfeeding.

Thank you
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