

Submission no. 452AUTHORISED: 20/6/07 *Rz*

Subject: when breastfeeding doesn't work

Sir/Madam

My son is now one year of age. During my pregnancy I was determined to breastfeed him exclusively, expressing when I had to return to work. I had even arranged with my workplace to allow me to go somewhere private to do this. I joined A.B.A. and armed myself with every piece of information possible, believing that if any problems should crop up, then I'd have an idea of how to rectify them and that if I persevered long and hard enough, I'd be fine.

I didn't count on developing severe pre-eclampsia! My son had to be delivered early and was in the Special Care nursery for over a week, being tube fed, due to some problems he was having, not to mention I was far too sick to have him with me on the ward full time, and was not able to be at the nursery with him for as long as I'd have liked each day. For most of my 6 week stay in hospital I was in the ward where there were only a very limited number of patients, due to the fact they were so sick or had some sort of problem and the midwives could give them more individual care.

On day 3, when my milk came in, it was vastly different to how I'd heard other women describing the experience. They would describe being engorged, having blocked ducts, mastitis, having to express to be able to get bub to attach, you name it! I had none of that! I felt slightly fuller and a little bit flu-like, but that was it. Cameron, once he was attached, had a nice strong grip (the best feeling!) but he wasn't getting much from me. We tried everything possible to increase my supply (only excluding mactillian because it conflicted with my blood pressure medication) including using a few tricks to "fool him" into thinking he was getting food from me and thus be inclined to continue, but nothing worked. At three weeks of age, he flat out rejected the breast. I'd try and attach him, he might take one, maybe two sucks, then would pull off screaming. I tried giving him a bottle to take the edge of his hunger and then attaching him. Didn't work! I was actually told by my doctor that considering how sick I'd been I'd done very well to get him to do as much as we had. Two of the midwives even

consoled me, telling me I'd been very sick and tried my best. They said "if you decide you can't persevere, no one is going to think badly of you". That was so sweet, but my son was the one who decided not to persevere! I couldn't even express my milk as there was just nothing there. All I was able to get were a few drops. Ultimately if my son had to rely on breastmilk, he'd have starved. I remember feeling envious of one of the mothers in my mother's group who told us she'd had to express to relieve engorgement and had got 200mls! At the time, that would have equated to just over two bottles for my son.

If we just had problems with attachment, I could have expressed and fed him, if the supply alone was the problem, I might have been able to use a supply line or the like, but when you've got no milk and a baby who won't attach, you're really fighting a losing battle.

Formula may not be the best food available for babies, but for some, it's the only available option.

Jo