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26th February 2007

Committee Secretary
The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
House of Representatives
Po Box 6021
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Before having my son I worked as a Dietitian and therefore am fortunate to be educated of the many benefits (both health and financial) of breastfeeding both for infant and mother. As a result I was highly motivated to breastfeed my son and was a successful "breast feeder" for 16 months. I strongly believe if I did not have the benefit of being educated in the benefits of breastfeeding during my degree as a dietitian I would have given up breastfeeding within the first 6 weeks.

During the first few days after the birth of my son I found breastfeeding very difficult and painful. Knowing that breastfeeding should not be painful I consulted 3 different midwives about this and asked them to watch me attach my son and feed him to see if I was positioning and attaching him correctly. All three midwives assured me that I was positioning and attaching him correctly. After I mentioned to one midwife that I was finding breastfeeding painful, she responded "of course it will hurt!"

Once discharged from hospital the pain increased and I even dreaded the thought of feeding my son and put it off as much as possible and I would only feed him for 20mins each side. My son at times was very unsettled and looking back now I believe it was simply because he was hungry. Within 2 weeks of the birth I was torn between not wanting to breastfeed and not wanting to stop either. By this stage I had nipple damage. With the encouragement and wonderful support of my husband I was able to seek help from lactation consultants. They were able to further educate me on positioning, attachment and general feeding techniques (e.g emptying one breast before changing sides and letting my son feed as long as he wants rather than watching the clock). It still took a few more weeks but I was able to see and feel what correct breastfeeding was like and it encouraged me to persevere.

How much "easier" those first few weeks would have been if I could have breastfed my son comfortably and without pain, so he could feed till he was content and full rather than my strict 20mins. All of this could have been avoided if I received correct information and advice from the midwives in hospital before discharge.

Another obstacle came when my son was around 4 months old. During a routine visit to the child health clinic the nurse told me that my son had not gained enough weight because he dropped one percentile on the growth charts. At this stage my son was feeding regularly throughout 24 hours and as long as he wanted. He was a content,

happy, well developed in all other ways and alert baby. I was devastated and felt that I was not providing for my baby. I was advised to breastfeed him more often but this proved impossible as he was already having all he wanted. When I myself plotted his weight on the new WHO charts for breastfed babies rather than the formula-fed growth charts used at the clinics the results were very different and in fact my son had not dropped a percentile for weight. If these charts were used to begin with a lot of unnecessary stress and heartache could have been saved.

Mothers face many challenges when having babies and raising their children. What a shame it is that breastfeeding has to be one of those challengers. So much stress and heartache can be saved if all mothers to be and new mothers could access correct and consistent information on breastfeeding and ongoing support.

Kind Regards,

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