

Submission no. 472

AUTHORISED: 

I believe you are collecting stories from women in an attempt to help future mums when breastfeeding.

I believe it is really important that all pregnant women are told by their GP, Midwife or Obstetrician that the Australian Breastfeeding Association is available to help them BEFORE they have their baby. The 24 hour ABA counselling service is a great support system but it would be great if the information given on these phone calls was given prior to the problems occurring. I suggest that the government make use of the ABA's passion to support women by funding them so they can offer every pregnant mum FREE membership for 12 months available to them from 26 weeks gestation. This would give women a network of other mums that they could bond with prior to the arrival of their babies as well as much needed information.

I remember constantly feeling like I was doing it all wrong when I had my first baby by the things that were said to me by medical professionals and yet when I had my second baby I was treated like I would know it all as I had done it before. For some time after birth mums are physically exhausted and sensitive emotionally. The length of this time can vary not only with each mother but with each child as well. During this time they need to be encouraged. Conflicting advice given by medical professionals to new mums is terribly confusing and leaves new mums feeling unsure of themselves and their abilities. Of course another issue is how mothers perceive they are going with their breastfeeding role. Some mums think they have done a good job when they get through the first week. Others are happy to make it to one month, others for 6 months or 12 months. Some women however still feel guilty for 'giving up' after feeding for 2 years. Maybe we would help mothers through the transitions of from starting through to finishing feeding by further promoting the standard 12 month feeding recommendation in an encouraging and supportive way.

With regards too stopping breastfeeding (or 'giving up') I think women do so for many reasons and that for many it is because they see it as the only way to solve another problem. From my understanding these problems include but are not limited to Mastitis, Cracked Nipples, Poor Attachment, PND, Exhaustion, Dietary Restrictions, Exercise Levels, The Pill, Returning to Work, Low Milk Supply, Complimentary Feeding, Embarrassment, Introducing Solids, Teething, Pregnancy, Family Pressure, Social Pressure, and Guilt.

One thing for sure is that as parents we are told what it is expected of us in relation to feeding our older children a healthy diet (ie healthy natural food not just processed foods) but it is not made clear that breastfeeding is the natural milk option and that choosing formula feeding is equivalent to offering a completely processed food diet. By educating women in this fact many may very well look for different ways to solve the above issues without threatening their own ability to keep feeding

Last but not least, so many children grow up in our society not realising that there may be an alternative way of life to the 'normal' way they were brought up. If the government believes so strongly in supporting the next generation then it is important to expand on the Drug Education and Sex Education classes already taught to students and offering Practical Parenting Courses and Breastfeeding Classes as part of mainstream education again. I know my mothers Mothercraft books from when she went to school approximately 40 years ago helped me considerably when I had my first child 7 years ago. I never learnt anything like that at school.

I do hope my email will be of assistance in the work that you are doing and I look forward to a reply.

Sharon Mulheron