



BREASTFEEDING BOOTCAMP

Breastfeeding in my experience is not the baby meets breast and lives happily ever after story I heard in the hospital childbirth education class. In fact it was a bit of a nightmare in which never got to go to sleep from. That's right a baby feeds every two hours in the first month. This is not much sleep in itself. My baby however didn't latch properly for 6 weeks and that meant a 1 hour and 15 minute feeding cycle of attempted breastfeeding followed by tube feeding (previously pumped breast milk) followed by cup feeding (this is because baby often didn't get enough from the tube as he had a weak suck) followed by pumping to stimulate my milk production and get milk for use in my next feeding cycle. When did that next feeding cycle happen? Well most often 15 minutes from the end of the previous cycle. When feeding a newborn baby a feedings are approximately every two hours. It is important new moms understand that the two hours is from the beginning of the first (no matter when it ends) While this may sound daunting there is nothing I would have wished for more than the reality version of breastfeeding then the glamorized version I got that made it seem like a mom and baby romance!

I loved breastfeeding my children. It was one of the most profound experiences of my life. I did not love my first 3 months of my first child's life. I can honestly say that my expectations of early motherhood were crushed by the misconceptions fed to me by the educational professionals that fed me the text version of breastfeeding 101. While many may say this is an isolated incidence my personal work with 1000's of new mothers tells me otherwise.

Here are the top things I think every expecting mom should know to get best ready for breastfeeding

Choose carefully- Don't just sign up for the first Breastfeeding class you find. Especially if this is an out of pocket expense get referrals from other moms in your region. They vary in quality quite a bit so feedback from prior participants is useful

Seek Experience- The one thing that differentiates our culture from cultures where breastfeeding is across the board is informal social support. If you have grown up watching breastfeeding all around you every day you instinct around this will be heightened. In North America most woman have seen very little and if at all across the room under a blanket. Exposure helps. If you have new mommy friends ask them about what to expect. See if they will let you observe some feedings.

Manage your expectations – What you want to happen and what actually does are two different things. Keep your eye on the prize so to speak. Also plan to be fairly absorbed in this process in the beginning days which brings me to my next point.

Practise makes perfect – People don't get degrees over night so don't expect that breastfeeding will happen overnight either. The facts are it is challenging for most. Accepting this fact will increase the likelihood of success



Prepare- Planning for what many call the 4th stage of labour is one of the best things you can do for yourself. This means getting your kitchen stocked with pre prepared foods that are easily warmed. Recruit help for things that can consume you like laundry and household tasks.

Educate your support system- fully. This is a tough especially for those of us who have older in-laws set in their ways. I always think it is good measure to respect the wisdom of our elders but sometimes it is difficult when current research conflicts age old advice. An example of this is in some cultures the older woman believes that in addition to breast milk a baby needs water. This is simply not true and is nutritionally counterproductive. Breast milk is 80% water. That's so your baby is kept well hydrated well getting all the nutrients that breast milk provides. When a baby fills up on water between feedings they do not spend as much time at the breast also getting the nutrients.

Prioritize- Very challenging as first time moms especially want to be perfect at it. While admirable focusing on only the essentials and getting as much or alternatively letting as much go as you can will go a long way to saving your sanity. It's not forever, take the time to be present to what you in the baby really need.

Remove temptation – While it is possible you may feel you need to go to a bottle don't put it in your face. Leave the bottle at the store.

Best wishes for breastfeeding..