

WHAT I WISH I KNEW ABOUT BREASTFEEDING BEFORE I BECAME A MOM

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Breastfeeding is natural. It's also one of the toughest tasks a new mom has to face. Why is something so natural so damn hard?

The science and the evidence and clearly the physiological truth is that breasts are meant to feed babies. Our bodies are designed so and so are our babies. Why then do so many women stop breastfeeding because they find it so hard? Why does something so natural end up giving heartache, nipple pain, plugged ducts, and other painful contraptions?

Many of the initial breastfeeding problems stem from the baby being (almost) the same as he was for 100's and 1000's of years with the same [primal needs](#), where as the mom is a woman of today with a lifestyle and schedule that is alien to the baby. **Stone age baby, modern mom.** Kind of like how all modern health problems stem from our bodies not evolving fast enough for the modern pace of life. (Paleo anyone?) But that's of course for another discussion.

Coupled with birth- undoubtedly one of the most natural and beautiful occurrences on this planet – occurring in an unnatural setting, and then the baby being whisked away from the mother for 'check ups' for no apparent reason. In a natural habitat (ie. when placed on the mother where she belongs) a newborn will [initiate breastfeeding](#) herself. Puppies do it as do all other mammalian young, as long as they are in the right habitat ie. on the mom, they will latch on.

Then there are the myths surrounding breastfeeding. People around the mother are convinced she is not making enough milk if the baby whimpers even after a feed. **For the baby the breast is his home.** He wants to be at the breast all the time not because he is hungry and you're not making enough milk, but because that's where he feels safe and loved. The breast is never empty and the breast is constantly making milk. It's not a bottle that gets empty. The more the baby suckles or the more you pump the more milk there is.

Note: I've said many of the problems relate to the list mentioned above not all. Many times moms don't manage to breastfeed for very long thanks to these reasons but sometimes moms can't make enough milk genuinely. Hormonal issues play a role and poor nutrition in the perinatal period also has its place but that's for another post.

But for the majority of moms, here are some thoughts that can help a new mom breastfeed and some if these things I wish I knew earlier so that the journey could have been smoother:

- Make sure that you tell your partner, doctor, whoever else that you want to **initiate breastfeeding IMMEDIATELY after birth or as soon as possible**. This is possible in case of a C-section too. The doctor can start the medications that make you drowsy after breastfeeding has been established. Research after research shows that when breastfeeding is established within half an hour after birth, the fewer problems down the line. Not only that but the baby expects to be with his mother after birth and gets stressed when separated.
- **Follow your instincts**: If being held by you, being at the breast constantly, sleeping near you

etc. comforts the baby, do it. Do not listen to anyone telling you she will form a bad habit. She won't. She is only expecting to be taken care of the way babies have always expected to be taken care of since the [beginning of time](#). Breastfeed on demand, co-sleep, babywear, nurture by breastfeeding.

- Know that for the first few months after the baby is born everything else has to wait. **Stay in bed**, nurse frequently, **stay [skin to skin](#) as much as possible** in the initial few months (naked baby on mom or dad's naked chest), [wear your baby](#) for naps and know that this time will pass in the blink of an eye. Soon you will be able to be out and about without your little one if you so wish. But just not now.
- **Watch plenty of videos on latch.** Earlier women used to see other women breastfeeding all the time. It was the only way to feed a baby right? So imagine moms latching a baby on as she goes about her day with her pre-teen watching her. It wasn't something that was to be learnt. Today that's changed a lot and I had never seen a mom breastfeed before I breastfed. I educated myself by watching a lot of Youtube videos and it worked.
- **Nurse frequently night and day.** Lots of moms who co-sleep and roll over to nurse at night before the baby even lets out a cry report a good quality of sleep over all. Giving a bottle before the baby goes to bed makes the baby sleep longer is a myth and too many moms have sadly fallen for it and weaned prematurely in the process.
- **Get help.** Reach out to an online forum, talk to a lactation specialist, talk to a pro-breastfeeding mom when the going gets tough. Sometimes all you need is a little bit of handholding and push in the right direction. And sometimes this can make all the difference between stopping at 3 months or continuing for 3 years. (Yes it's true!)

I wouldn't change a second of my nearly 20 months and still going strong nursing relationship in spite of initial screw ups and I hope this post helps new moms out there establish one too.

Thanks for reading. Chime in with thoughts/ comments.

