

BREASTFEEDING MYTHS

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When women look back on the time they spent breastfeeding their babies, what they remember most is the closeness - the intimacy of feeding a baby at the breast. When you choose to breastfeed, you continue the "oneness" that you and your baby experienced during pregnancy. Your body continues to provide nourishment, warmth, comfort, and safety, just as it did when baby was inside you.

Once you have mastered the basics, breastfeeding will make mothering easier. Unfortunately, many times, you will be bombarded with Breastfeeding Myths at a time when you need most support, confusing you, and undermining your confidence to success. A modern disease is the "Insufficient Milk Syndrome" where women can be convinced that they are incapable of feeding their baby.

Whatever "advice" you receive, please check it out with us. Our telephone helpline 21 234 637 is always available for any queries or difficulties you might have regarding Breastfeeding. We are always here to help you; just leave your name and telephone number if we are not available immediately. Alternatively, contact Post Natal Ward on tel: 2595 1477, where you can ask for the Breastfeeding advisor or any other midwife when the former is not available. Someone else you can turn to for support is someone who has breastfed successfully and believes in breastfeeding. Infact, some mothers have even formed support groups, one of which is the Association of Breastfeeding Counsellors (ABC) - tel: 21 449 930.

True or False?

Many women do not produce enough milk.

False! The vast majority of women produce enough milk. Most babies that lose or gain weight too slowly do so not because the mother does not have enough milk, but because the baby does not get the milk that the mother has. The usual reason that the baby does not get the milk is that he is poorly latched onto the breast. This is why it is important that the mother is shown how to latch a baby on properly.

There is not enough milk during the first 3 or 4 days after birth.

Not true! It often seems like that because the baby is not latched on properly and therefore is unable to get the milk. Once the mother's milk is abundant, a baby can latch on poorly and still may get plenty of milk. However, during the first few

days, the baby who is latched on poorly cannot get milk.

Women with small breasts produce less milk than those with large breasts. Women with flat or inverted nipples cannot breastfeed.

False! Babies do not breastfeed on nipples, but on the breast. Though it may be easier for a baby to latch on to a breast with a prominent nipple, it is not necessary for nipples to stick out.

It is normal for breastfeeding to hurt.

False! Some tenderness during the first few days is relatively common; this should be a temporary situation which lasts only a few days and should never be so bad that the mother dreads nursing. Pain that is more than mild is abnormal and is almost always due to the baby latching on poorly. Nipple pain that is not getting better by day 3 or 4 or lasts beyond 5 or 6 days should not be ignored. Limiting feeding time does not prevent soreness.

A breastfeeding baby needs extra water in hot weather.

False! Breastmilk contains all the water a baby needs. It is also false that a breastfeeding baby needs extra Vitamin D. The baby stores vitamin D during pregnancy. Also, outside exposure on a regular basis provides the baby with vitamin D.

It is easier to bottle feed than to breastfeed.

False! Breastfeeding is made difficult because women often do not receive the help they should to get started properly. A poor start can indeed make breastfeeding difficult. Breastfeeding usually becomes easier with time.

Breastfeeding ties the mother down.

False! It depends on how you look at it. A baby can be nursed anywhere, anytime, thus liberating the mother. No need to drag around bottles or formula. No need to worry about where to warm up the milk and about sterilising.

There is no way to know how much breast milk the baby is getting.

False! There is no easy way to guarantee how much milk the baby is getting, but this does not mean that you cannot know if the baby is getting enough. The best way to know is that the baby actually drinks at the breast for several minutes at each feeding (open - pause - close type of suck).

Pumping is a good way of knowing how much milk the mother has.