

❖ **BREAST-FEEDING**

There is a lot of pressure that we mothers put on ourselves to breastfeed. Partly because of the social stigma around using formula; as if we are doing an injustice to our baby by choosing this option. But like anything in life there are good and bad aspects to both choices and it is no-one's right to comment or judge you. We live in a world of freedom of choice, so you should only ever do what feels right and comfortable for you and your baby.

What are the benefits of breast-feeding?

Studies have found that breast milk is best for your child as it may prevent;

- ✓ Constipation
- ✓ lowers the incidence of food allergies
- ✓ gains nutrition and antibodies from the mother
- ✓ increases the immune system
- ✓ excellent bonding time with the baby in a way that no-one can share with the child
- ✓ promotes healthy oral development
- ✓ The ASCIA (Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy) suggest that breastfeeding for the first 6 months can reduce the risk of developing asthma, wheezing and respiratory allergies.

The main thing I like about breast-feeding is the individual bond that you as the Mother can share with your baby that no-one can stand in and replace. The skin-to-skin contact is so precious and beautiful and allows for both mother and child to return back to the basic form of touch. Not that feeding from a bottle allows for less bonding and since I did both forms of feeding, I am not swayed one way or another!

I found that when I was pregnant I found so many articles and websites telling me the benefits of breastfeeding in a 'scientific' sense but I couldn't find any tools for me to enjoy this process anymore. Sure there are the 'My breast-friend pillow's' to make it more comfortable, but nothing for me to connect to the spiritual and nurturing side of this process.

So, I have developed a range called Baby Bliss that are meditations that you can listen to whilst you are (pregnant) as well as breastfeeding your baby that can help you to feel at peace and connected with your baby as much as they are to you.

There are also affirmations that you can listen to and/or read to your baby whilst feeding and bonding that truly reinforces this life-force and connection that you both have with each other. They affirmations empower both of you into believing and knowing that you are special, unique, worthy of being loved and worthy of being here in this world.

I think that there is so much focus on the 'fear' of what you should or shouldn't do and on 'tasks' to get done that we miss the whole point of this whole process.

What are the down-sides to breast-feeding?

Although we see in the magazines, pictures of the beautiful nursery and the baby feeding nicely... it is not always a picture perfect vision when they can't attach properly, your milk is either being produced too quickly or not fast enough or your nipples are cracking or bleeding!

There are also some serious things that can happen whilst feeding that can make it very painful to continue until you have the right treatment;

Engorgement:

This is a temporary problem caused by increased blood supply to the breast and the pressure to produce new milk which leads to the swelling of the tissues in the breast. It can cause;

- × A low fever
- × the breasts can be hard, tender and full
- × The skin can become tight, hot and shiny.

It can be helped/'relieved'/'assisted' by applying moist heat pads for 30 minutes before feeding as this can allow the milk to flow nicely.

Some people suggest avoid nipple shields if you can as it can change the baby's sucking patterns and decrease milk supply. Other people may find this the only way to feed comfortably if your nipples are very sore and cracked.

It can also help if you 'feed on demand' and 'without delay'. This may allow for the milk to flow completely and reduce engorgement from happening.

Mastitis:

This is an infection and swelling of the breast that is normally caused by bacteria entering the breast through cracks or fissures in the nipple. It causes;

- × Severe pain
- × Redness of the breast
- × fever
- × Sometimes yellow pus-like secretions can occur from the nipple.

Ensure that you rest as much as you can to aid your recovery and drink HEAPS of water. Keep the nipples nice and aerated by wearing loose fitting clothes (which also can reduce the pain of heavy clothes on your breasts) such as cotton.

Keep the nipples moisturised using Lansinoh, which is a cream, designed to reduce dry, cracked and sore nipples.

Applying heat to the nipples can often help push milk out but most women need antibiotics to actually treat the condition. Some women must stop feeding until they recover and use a breast pump to help express the milk to allow healing to occur.

When should I start my child on water?

Introducing water too early can make your baby too full and reduce how much milk they are drinking (which in turn will reduce how much milk you produce). Also, they can be at risk of getting water intoxication, which is where all of their salts/electrolytes are diluted from the water and can cause complications.

Generally, you may want to start giving them small sips of water (boiled first and then cooled) from 6 months of age. They should continue their milk during this time too. Once they are 12 months and eating a lot of semi/solid foods then you can give them much more to drink.

How can I treat my sore/cracked nipples?

The main-stay of treatment is Lansinoh which contains 100% pure HPA Lanolin. This acts as a barrier and seals in the moisture in your nipples and should make feeding less painful. Use it as often as you need to and it does not need to be wiped off before feeding unless you prefer to.

Try applying it straight after a shower as this can seal in the most amount of moisture.

What if my breasts have oral thrush from my baby on them?

If your baby has oral thrush then you need to treat your breasts as well. Otherwise you will keep passing it on back and forth to each other and it becomes a vicious cycle!

You need to treat your baby with Nilstat Oral Drops (1mL four times a day after feeds).

If they are older than 6 months, then you can use Daktarin Oral gel on your baby and your nipples. You will need to massage the gel onto your breasts four times a day and wipe it off before feeding if your baby is less than 6 months old. They have found that the gel can cause gagging/choking of the baby so it is no longer suitable to use.