

My Breastfeeding Experience By Isti

The first two-months of my breastfeeding experience were awful. My days were filled with fear and tears; fear that I couldn't continue breastfeeding my baby due to dwindling milk supply and tears when I had to supplement his feed with formula milk.

It would not have happened if I knew enough about breastfeeding, such as the importance of an early latch on. On the advice of a nurse who felt that I was too weak to breastfeed my baby after a c-section, my baby was formula fed in the first hours of his life. I only attempted to breastfeed him on the second day. My baby often cried in frustration when he was unable to latch on and suckle. Another nurse felt that my nipple was too short and introduced me to this "long-fake-nipple" to help the baby suckle better. Fortunately, I had abundant milk supply in the initial days and my baby could nurse happily.

This happiness was short-lived for when he turned three-weeks old he breastfeed non-stop the entire day. Yet, he only gained 300grams in weight and was below 3kg. The paediatrician advised me to substitute breastfeeding with formula milk as my milk was not good, making me feel inadequate as a mother.

However, my instincts told me that it was not my milk that was inferior. Instead, it could be the way that I breastfed my baby that was the problem. Breast milk is proven to be the best milk for baby and I would be guilt ridden if I cannot provide him with the best in life. So, I sort help from a Lactation Consultant to overcome my difficulties. I was relieved to learn that I could continue breastfeeding without giving him formula milk. With patience and another month of struggles, my baby learnt to suckle well.

All this would not have happened if I had been better informed about breastfeeding. The importance of an early latch on when the baby has a strong suckling reflex means that all mothers, including those who have been through a c-section operation, should breastfeed their babies early. Mothers also need not worry about the state of their nipples; even mothers with inverted nipples can breastfeed successfully.

I do not blame the nurse and paediatrician for the wrong advice nor do I mind my initial struggles because I am now enjoying the benefits of breastfeeding. My son is 15 months of age and still breastfeeding. We've flown to Auckland, NZ and Padang, just the two of us. Thought the flight to Auckland was 12 hours, it was a breeze because I could nurse him whenever he felt hungry or needed comfort.

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