

## Got milk? By Nurhana Ismail

i had geared myself up mentally to the point of delivery, but beyond that, i had no idea what was to take place.

i have to say that the hardest part for me in the whole postnatal experience was: breastfeeding.

i'd already steeled my will to breastfeed no matter what, and nothing was gonna stop me.

the first day, the nurse got the baby to latch on me, and i knew nothing was coming out, but the baby suckled beautifully, so i prayed something will come out soon.

the feeling at first was very strange. it was like... being in labour again! \*gasp\* when he suckled, i felt contractions. and it was tingly down there. very strange indeed.

he suckled and suckled and suckled, and i was soon convinced i'll never have any milk come out of me.

the first day wasn't too bad, because he slept a lot. but by night time, he'd grown hungry and was sucking even more voraciously for what seemed like hours. also, by night time, i'd lost my adrenaline rush from the birth, the baby and the visitors. but he kept on sucking and crying and getting windy from sucking air instead of milk. needless to say, in the wee hours of our second day together, baby and i were extremely exhausted and frustrated.

the nurse offered to give the baby either glucose water or formula. i was torn. and gave in to glucose water.

the next morning we tried again, and still the baby was crying. it MUST be tiring, all that sucking and not being sufficiently rewarded for such hard work. this time, i gave in to formula.

and i cried.

the doctor came to visit the day after, and asked how i was feeling. i replied with a meek "overwhelmed", so he tempted me to stay one more night at the hospital. i hesitated at the sweet thought of all those nice nurses at my beck and call, all their help with the baby, and all that nice food which kept appearing at my bed... and said ok.

i'm glad i decided to stay. not only did i recover by leaps and bounds with that one extra day at the hospital, it gave me a LOT of confidence in handling my newborn. i gathered tips from observing the nurses, and asking questions in the nursery. little things like swaddling the baby, cleaning him up, burping him, and most importantly, discovering that - I HAD MILK.

one of the nurses checked to see if i was lactating by squeezeing my areola... and LO AND BEHOLD! clear liquid secreted out of me, followed by a drop of dilute white stuff. amazing, i tell ya!

seeing that one tiny drop of milk was enough for me to keep persevering in my breastfeeding endeavours. of course, the discomforts of engorgement and sore nipples made me cringe when it was time to feed. but never once did i think of giving up.

my masseuse came to my house the afternoon i got back from hospital, and from her, i gathered more tips on breastfeeding, things i didn't read up on prior to delivery, thinking naively then that it'll all come naturally (boy, was i oh-so-wrong!).

by my fourth day as a mother, i was happy to announce that i was the owner of two FULLY functional boobs.

i have been totally breastfeeding since the day i brought my baby home, and the experience is indeed wonderful. even now, i still feel amazed at the thought of providing sustenance for my child from my own body. simply... miraculous.

and my little one loves his happy hours. :)

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