

## Breastfeeding, Your Best Gift To Your Baby (2004)

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This book, with about 50 pages of content, seems like a simple book to start breastfeeding. It covers major topics like

- Why choose breastfeeding
- Anatomy and physiology of the breast
- Breastfeeding problems of mothers
- Effects of medicines and drugs on lactation
- Breastfeeding under special circumstances
- Expressed Breast Milk

However, I felt that this book is disappointing and may even be mis-leading to a new mother keen on breastfeeding. So, for new mothers, please read with caution.

Firstly, it is sponsored by MeadJohnson, Avent and Sanofi-Synthelabo, a formula company, a bottle feeding friendly company and a drug company respectively. I question the objectiveness of the book.

Secondly, the semantics and language in the book is not encouraging for breastfeeding. For example:

a. In the title: "Your best gift to your baby", by using "to" instead of "for" indicates that breastmilk is one of the many gifts. b. In page 19, the first sentence reads "In theory, breastfeeding can begin from the moment of birth". Does that mean in reality, breastfeeding cannot begin from the moment of birth? The fact is that breastfeeding should and can begin as soon as possible, even from the moment of birth. c. In the same paragraph, it was also written, "You should not have any fear of letting your newborn baby suckle..". This sentence is negatively expressed with emphasis on fear.

And the way the content is covered does not do justice to the wonders of breastfeeding and breastmilk. For example:

a. The reasons that the author gave for breastfeeding is not backed by any mention of their research. This reduces the credibility of the benefits of breastfeeding even though there are numerous research expounding on their benefits, from WHO (World Health Organisation), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), APP (American Academy of Pediatrics) and more.

b. In page 11: "Iron requirement of infant is 8-10mg/day.. This (human milk) does not meet the iron requirements. However, total breastfed babies have not been anaemic. Formula supplies 10-12mg per day." The author has implied that formula is better than breastmilk.

c. In Singapore, there are numerous myths against breastfeeding. I had expected a topic to debunk myths. Instead, it was only mentioned as a part of "why choose breastfeeding".

d. Furthermore, the author did not debunk the 10 myths that she had highlighted in the "why choose breastfeeding" section with any reasons. She merely said that there are not scientific basis for the myths, which may indicate that these myths are still myths because they are not proven to be true yet. The myths are again repeated in "effects of medicine and drugs on lactation" and this time, it is more blantly stated "however, it is only a belief and there is no scientific evidence to support it".

e. 50% of the topics chosen and titled in the content page (3, 4 and 5) project a negative image of breastfeeding. In page 25, there are 5 ways to see if the baby is having enough and 6 ways to see if the baby is not having enough. There is less than 4pages on benefits of breastmilk but 10pages of breastfeeding problems.

f. She mentioned the other forms of breastfeeding — exclusive, almost exclusive, partial and token but did not mention how important exclusive breastfeeding is.

g. There are 3 photos of nipples that are sore, engorged with accessory nipple and with white bleb. They are not necessary and even if necessary, should portray a realistic picture. How many engorged breasts come with an accessory nipple? This is a rare condition and should not even be shown at all. These are unnecessarily gory and will strike fear on many new mothers.

h. The "suspending breastfeeding" mentioned after "management of jaundice in breastfed pre-term babies" is boxed up and made very prominent. This may imply to mothers to stop breastfeeding if their babies have jaundice.

i. There are only 2 drugs mentioned to increase breastfeeding and even then, both come with "used only as a last resort" and "side effects". Herbs, such as Fenugreek, are not even mentioned.

j. The author also mentioned that caffeine, even in 1 or 2 cups of coffee a day, taken over a period of 2 weeks can produce an additive effect in the nursing infant. This is a strong reason that can justify many mothers to stop breastfeeding.

k. It is ridiculous that there is only 2 sentences to elaborate on how to do manual expression of breastmilk and yet, nearly a full page of write up with pictures to describe cup feeding.

There are merely some of the discouragements than what I've highlighted. I think this book is effective if its aim is to discourage, confuse and worry mothers who are keen on breastfeeding.