

# Natural Breastfeeding Limited

This story covers: Low weight gain, Undersupply of milk and Latching

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Eleanor and Jamie Harkness

I contacted Cheryl when my son, Jamie, was 6 weeks old. I had made the decision to breastfeed long before he was born and did not think I would have any problems in feeding my baby. After all, how difficult could it be?!

I had a scheduled caesarian at 39 weeks after discovering at 38 weeks that Jamie was in a breech position. I was concerned I would not be experiencing labour and the associated hormone levels and this might affect my milk supply coming in and the establishment of breast feeding. My midwife was confident that I would be fine and she was right. Day 3 following Jamie's birth my milk was in and we were feeding!

Our problems arose when Jamie did not regain his birth weight as quickly as the health professionals would have liked. My latch was checked numerous times and I was given advice on using different feeding positions both before and after discharge from hospital. I was advised by my midwife to express milk after each feed and give these to Jamie as "top ups" at subsequent feeds following the breast milk feed. My supply did not increase as much as expected through expressing and when Jamie was 17 days old I was advised to start giving him formula top ups to supplement my own milk and the expressed milk top ups.

I continued to feed Jamie in this way for 2-3 weeks and he gained weight and became a much more contented baby as he was no longer hungry and struggling to feed from me. I was happier that my baby was putting on weight but upset and disappointed at my inability to breastfeed him exclusively. My milk supply dwindled further as the formula top ups increased in volume and at the 5/6 week mark Jamie was preferring to take a bottle rather than breastfeed which was extremely upsetting for me. It was easier for him to not struggle with breastfeeding but to wait for the bottle. I felt like I'd failed in a basic biological task and whilst I knew deep down that I should not blame myself, I wanted to feed my baby.

Cheryl visited us 24 hours after I'd called her and gave my bottle feeding and breast feeding techniques a full examination as well as an examination of Jamie's mouth. Cheryl diagnosed a latching problem and was confident that once Jamie had been taught how to latch on and use his tongue properly we would see an improvement in my milk supply as it would be stimulated sufficiently to provide all the milk needed. Until this happened I was advised to express milk using a double pump six times a day and to give Jamie top ups before each feed. Cheryl also recommended taking Fenugreek and Blessed Thistle supplements to aid my milk production. I hired a breast pump from Cheryl and found it to be a vast improvement than my single breast pump although to express so many times in a day requires a concerted effort, especially during the night and early hours. With Cheryl's support I found that I had confidence we would restore my milk supply and Jamie would continue to put on weight. I was supplied with an excel spreadsheet template to complete each day with Jamie's feeding statistics: quantity of milk expressed, quantity of milk top ups given, length of feeds and number of nappies and I emailed this to Cheryl each day and she would follow up with a phone call to provide support and advice where necessary. I valued these phone calls especially when I wasn't sure if Jamie and I were on the right track.

I think the key to Cheryl's success as a lactation consultant are her communication skills; she is personable, understanding, non-judgemental and explains ideas clearly. The follow up support provided via phone calls and emails is invaluable. I gained confidence as we worked together in my ability as a mother because Cheryl helped me trust my instincts and I was thrilled when Jamie became an exclusively breast fed baby again. We have not looked back and therefore I would not hesitate to recommend Cheryl's services.