

Natural Breastfeeding Limited

This story covers: Nipple damage, Long feeds, Tongue tie and Latching

My Breastfeeding Story by Keriata Royal

As every mother can vouch for, there are many places where this particular story can begin. It can begin right at the beginning of your pregnancy, where some mothers feel certain that breastfeeding is the only way to feed your child. Or right at the end of the pregnancy, where you decide right when you see your baby for the first time that you choose to breastfeed him/her. My story began right around the middle of my pregnancy. I had heard that breastfeeding created the best start in life for your child, so I just assumed, being a naïve, first-time mother, that this would be the easiest and most rewarding path to take. I was almost right.

Breastfeeding has definitely been one the most rewarding aspects of having a baby, however it has also been one of the most challenging. My son was born at 5.52pm, 13 October 2010, at Wellington Hospital, and weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces. Almost within minutes of my partner, placing him on my chest, my son could already smell my milk, and wanted to be fed. My midwives decided that because he was already so eager, that we might as well put him on the breast straight away! He took to it fairly easily the first go and ate as if he'd been doing it all along. It seemed like a fairytale beginning and that it would continue to be this easy. But my hopes slowly faded throughout the two nights I stayed at the hospital. It was very hard trying to get used to constantly getting up throughout the night, and getting used to the demand feeding. Throughout the two nights (particularly the second night) I noticed that the feeding starting getting harder and harder as my breasts started to become sore. I wasn't quite sure why it was hurting and I constantly had to ask for help throughout the night with the breastfeeding. The hurting wasn't going away but it was bearable, so I stuck with it, even though I knew I needed some specific help.

Once I left the hospital, at this moment, the hardest thing wasn't bearing through the pain, but the complete change in sleeping patterns we had to get used too. Once I slowly got over that, the pain was the biggest wall that was blocking me in fulfilling the needs of my baby, feeding wise. At first I was told that baby hadn't been latched on properly from the beginning so therefore, I had continued to latch him on wrong so then the pain from the nipple trauma I had was still healing. But I felt like it wouldn't heal because I had to give them time to heal, however, I found it impossible to create time for them to heal because I was constantly feeding, as baby was always on my breasts. I kept applying nipple cream, however, I wasn't convinced it was really working and healing everything that needed to be healed. Out of my two breasts, it seemed to be slightly easier to feed off the right breast, and so I tended to lean towards feeding more off my right side only. As I started to see my first lactation consultant, she advised that I try and do everything I can to feed or get milk out of my left breast as it was building up and starting to get very sore. She said that if I don't try to get the milk out I could possibly end up getting a breast infection, most likely, mastitis. So I tried to put baby onto my left breast, with the help of a technique that the lactation consultant had given me, however, it still wasn't helping and the pain was still there. I did pump a little bit, and it did help, but I felt like it wasn't fulfilling my goal of fully breastfeeding.

I then found Cheryl, my second lactation consultant who I found to be very helpful. Almost immediately she could identify the specific areas that I was struggling with. She also noticed that his tongue wasn't extending out or elevating up making it harder for him to feed. This was to do with the fact that he had a slight tongue-tie, which needed to be released. The tongue-tie effected the latch, which led to one other problem – it would take much longer to feed baby until he was full, often taking even over an hour, because he would slip off so easily. What really made a huge effect with my breastfeeding was when the tongue-tie was released in baby's mouth. Not long after that, I noticed that the pain started to subside and baby was able to breastfeed much more effectively and would become full much faster than before.

From here on, breastfeeding has become much easier, and is that is now something natural for baby and I. I am not anxious anymore about breastfeeding and there is no more pain. It took about 2 months for the breastfeeding to become right, so during that time I felt I had to endure a lot. I never imagined that breastfeeding would turn out to be as hard as it has been, but the hard work has paid off. The best thing that came out of this experience, besides the result, was getting help. If I didn't seek help from a lactation consultant, then I'm not sure how much longer I would have lasted. So my biggest advice would be to seek help when you need it, keep a good attitude, and keep at it, because it definitely pays off in the end.