

Natural Breastfeeding Limited

This story covers: Low weight gain

Kylie Bowbys – breastfeeding story

Prior to having children it never really occurred to me that breastfeeding could be hard. You get told that it might not come easily all the time, but for some reason you assume that will be someone else's story. Having had children and spoken with lots of mothers, I have never heard anyone say they found it easy. Every new mother I have met has struggled with getting breastfeeding established – most to the point where they were in tears and considering switching to formula.

When my son was born we struggled through learning to breastfeed alone. I found the advice I received in hospital really confusing. An under-staffed maternity ward at full capacity meant that no one really had the time to sit with you. To make matters worse, every eight hours a new shift would start work and sometimes the advice would be contradictory.

I remember it being the hardest couple of months of my life. Whenever things were a little tough, the people around me were very quick to offer me bottle feeding as an alternative. As well as feeling completely overwhelmed by being a first-time parent, I also had to deal with sore, cracked nipples and battle through pain to keep feeding him myself. My son was around eight weeks old before we were comfortable feeding.

Once we had worked out latching, we then had to battle the regular weigh-ins. It always worried me when I was told that my son was not gaining weight as he should be. It only added to my stress levels when we were told at one weight check that he was underweight and the following one that the scales had been calibrated incorrectly last time. This is actually quite common – it also happened with my daughter. Another mother I know told me that when her daughter was weighed the midwife commented “Wow – that's the third baby this morning that hasn't put on weight.”

Instead of promoting breastfeeding, all this only seemed to encourage the use of formula as I could then monitor what he was getting. It was only my mother-in-law's words that kept me persisting with breastfeeding “Whatever did we do before such accurate scales? He's happy and healthy and I can see he's growing. Don't worry about it.” I got through to eight months breastfeeding my son.

Breastfeeding has certainly been easier with my daughter. For a start I was not going to persist on my own when I clearly needed some assistance. After a visit and lots of email and phone support from Cheryl, my daughter was growing really well. I hear the same old concerns about her weight gain, but having a happy, healthy son running around gives me the confidence to push back a little. Babies don't always grow according to lines on a graph. Life gets in the way of that – illness or a busy week can be the difference between growing beautifully and being of concern. Both my children put weight on in spurts. Getting an accurate picture of how they are growing means looking holistically over a long time period instead of just monitoring their weight.