



FIRST FEW WEEKS

Whether your birth needed lots of intervention or you delivered naturally, the first few days can be hard.

Trying to balance the exhaustion, worry and hormonal swings, with the often intense excitement and exhilaration that comes with new parenthood, is tricky, to say the least. Add to that the establishment of breastfeeding and the whole thing can fall apart.

Don't worry, with love and patience things can quickly improve.



Preparation is the key...

We would always recommend that you attend an ante natal workshop to teach you the basics of breastfeeding whilst still in the relative calm waters of pregnancy.

This undoubtedly gives you a head start and means that problems are less likely to develop, but if they do you can usually work out how to solve it yourselves.

Charnwood has a number of breastfeeding cafes (see www.charnwoodbras.co.uk) where you can go and get practical advice on positioning and attachment, troubleshooting for particular conditions such as mastitis and sore nipples or just some well needed confidence boosting and company.

Talking to other breast feeders has been shown to help tremendously in the early weeks and there are health professionals and local peer supporters on hand too.

When times are tough hang on to the reasons why you decided to breast feed in the first place.

It can take some time, but master the basics – poor positioning and attachment is the main cause for most common problems such as sore nipples or poor weight gain: problems, which can lead to women giving up all together.

As a couple you have decided to breastfeed. We can't emphasise enough how important the partners role is. If it is negative or impartial, the *let down* of important hormones needed for good milk production, can be effected. Instead, boost mum's confidence, try to troubleshoot, use skin to skin to comfort your baby, master bathing him, play, sing and talk to him ...the list is endless.



TIME MOVES ON...

Initial milk production happens gradually over the first week or so in response to stimulation at the breasts.

That's achieved by either a baby feeding, hand expression or by using a pump. Breastfeeding takes about 4-6 weeks to fully establish.

Women who accept this, get to know baby, feed on demand and catch up on their sleep whenever they can, find that breastfeeding becomes easier much sooner.

Don't try to find routines too soon.

Babies have no idea what a routine is. They need frequent small feeds to fill their tiny stomachs and settle their hunger and frequent contact with a familiar human being for security and love. Think of other little mammals, they too are programmed to be close to their mothers and feed frequently.

If you don't feed frequently, your breasts think milk is not needed and production will slow down, baby becomes agitated and hungry with insufficient weight gain and you could be tempted to offer some formula milk. Formula is slower to digest than breast milk so can make babies sleep for long periods which means even less stimulation on Mum's breasts. This vicious cycle commonly leads women to give up breastfeeding within the next 3 or 4 days.

It's worth knowing that most babies loose weight initially and don't regain their birth weight until about 2 or 3 weeks old.

Sleep whenever you can, accept help from family and friends.

There are lots of things in life that take determination and practice before they are mastered but we persevere because the end result is worth it; think of learning to drive a car or mastering another language.

Getting breastfeeding established is an important goal of the first few weeks.

Gradually your breasts will become more efficient at delivering milk when it's needed and your baby will become more effective at emptying your breasts. Slowly the whole process becomes more dependable. Little stomachs grow and in time are able to tolerate larger quantities. Consequently babies are able to settle for longer periods between feeds.

Before you know it, feeding will be established and you and your baby can relax and enjoy the whole experience. And of course, reap all of those brilliant benefits.

Well Done.