

Thinking About Breastfeeding

Time: 25 to 35 minutes total

Purpose: Help women explore their views about breastfeeding.

Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- 1) State current recommendations for prenatal breastfeeding preparation.
- 2) Identify two or more misconceptions about breastfeeding.
- 3) State ways that breastfeeding can fit into a woman's life.

Materials: Game – Myths in a Jar
Babies First: Family Support (PM-154)
Amy Spangler Parents' Guide to Breastfeeding
Prizes (optional)

1. Introduction:

“Many mothers believe that breastfeeding is best, but have concerns that prevent them from choosing to breastfeed. Some of the concerns are based on misconceptions that have been around for so long that they are believed to be true. Today, we will discuss some of the most common misconceptions and review the facts using a fun activity.”

2. **Ask participants** “ What have you heard about preparing your breasts for breastfeeding.” Share the facts by referring to the page in Amy Spangler's Parents' Guide to Breastfeeding that refers to prenatal preparation. Be prepared to address incorrect information. Use phrases like “ For a long time we did advise women to do that.....now we have new research that has shown”

3. **Introduce the Myths in Jar Game** - See the game outline with detailed instructions below. Locate the Myths in a Jar Game box containing all the supplies needed to play the game.

4. Summary statement:

Today we've identified some of the misconceptions about breastfeeding. Knowing the facts can help mothers to see how breastfeeding can easily fit into their life. Next week you'll learn how to get breastfeeding off to the very best start.

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Topic: “MYTHS IN A JAR” GAME

Adapted from a prenatal class game developed by the Massachusetts WIC Program and ProMOM online.

Goal & Objective:

This game will allow class participants an opportunity to express their feelings and concerns about specific breastfeeding issues in a fun and interactive manner. The purpose of the activity is to dispel common breastfeeding related myths.

Materials:

1. Large wide mouth jar (plastic preferred)
2. Paper strips with a typed breastfeeding related statement on it (See statements below - Roll each strip to create a paper curl and place all strips in the jar).

Methods/Activities:

1. Introduce the “Myths In A Jar” - Game.
State briefly: “This jar contains some possible breastfeeding related myths. A lot of myths about breastfeeding have been passed from mother to daughter for years. The purpose of this activity is to help you identify which statements are myths and allow everyone a chance to share their feelings about the issues raised as well as receive the facts.”
2. Begin the game by asking each participant to remove one statement from the jar until the jar is empty. Some participants may have more than one statement
3. Ask each participant to read a statement. **Be sure to respond with an affirming statement** such as:
 - “That’s a common belief”
 - “A lot of women have that concern”
 - “I felt that way too”
4. Have the participant to tell whether or not they believe the statement is a myth and share any feelings about it. Other participants can respond to the statement as well.
5. After the participants comment, the class leader should read or tell the facts about the statements. **(FYI – All of the statements are myths).**

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6. Repeat until all participants have shared at least one statement. Continue as time permits.

CLASS LEADER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Myth #1: Breastfeeding makes your breasts sag

Fact: As soon as a woman becomes pregnant her hormones cause permanent changes to occur in her breasts. Even if she doesn't carry the pregnancy to term, or chooses to abort, her breasts will never be the same as they were before she became pregnant. Whether or not she then goes on to breastfeed will not effect her future breast shape one way or another. Heredity plays a large role in whether the breast will sag, as does excessive weight gain or loss. It is helpful to maintain the tone of the muscles that support the breasts through proper exercise, and avoidance of large and sudden weight gains or losses whether pregnancy-related or otherwise.

Myth #2: Small-breasted women won't have enough milk

Fact: The size of the breasts, either large or small, has nothing to do with the amount of milk they will produce. Women have the same basic breast structure underneath. It is the amount of fat tissue that surrounds the milk producing glands that determines the size of the breast. Almost all women are capable of producing enough milk for their babies. The more the baby nurses, the more milk the breasts will be stimulated to produce. If the baby receives a formula supplement, the breasts will not receive adequate stimulation and the milk supply will decrease.

Myth #3: Formula is just as good as breast milk.

Fact: Even though today's formulas are considerably better than some made in past years, its still cow's milk and is not the same as human milk. Human milk contains many things that are not in formula. It is the perfect milk for human infants. We don't yet know all the special ingredients in human milk. New discoveries about breast milk are made every day. Every few months, formula companies come up with something different to try to improve formula and make it more like human milk. But guess what? If a mother chooses to breastfeed she doesn't have to worry about whether or not it has the latest and best ingredients. She can be confident that her milk has all the necessary nutrients, immunities, hormones and even things we don't yet know about will be present in the right amounts for her baby.

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Myth #4: Breastfeeding takes more time than bottle-feeding.

Fact: With breastfeeding there are no bottles to wash, boil, or prepare. Nighttime feedings are especially easier. A mother only has to open her gown and nurse the baby. It is certainly less time-consuming to go pick up the baby and offer the breast, than to get up, go to the kitchen, and prepare or warm a bottle then return to the baby and offer the bottle. It is tempting for an exhausted mother or father to prop up the bottle and leave the baby alone to finish it. Propping the bottle is extremely dangerous for the baby since he can easily choke. In the beginning, newborns do need to nurse more frequently because breast milk is more easily digested than formula. Easy digestibility means mothers spend less time dealing with colic, diarrhea and other ailments such as ear infections, and asthma.

Myth #5: You will spoil your baby if you give him what he wants whenever he wants it.

Fact: Responding to a baby's needs is not the same as spoiling them. Babies need to be fed when they are hungry, put to sleep when they are tired, to be comforted when they are sad. This will result in contented & satisfied babies, not dictating, demanding babies. When babies are content, they are better able to handle normal pains and frustrations that are a part of being human.

Myth #6: You can't get pregnant if you're breastfeeding.

Fact: Breastfeeding is only an effective form of birth control (98%) during the first 6 months, and is only effective during this period if the baby is receiving nothing but breast milk and nurses frequently especially at night. The chance of pregnancy increases greatly when the baby begins sleeping through the night, starts eating solids, and/or when the mother resumes her menstrual cycle. If a mother truly does not wish to become pregnant again yet, it is wise to use an additional method of birth control.

Myth #7: You must wean if you get pregnant.

Fact: There is no medical reason to wean if a mother becomes pregnant while breastfeeding, unless she has a history of pre-term labor or other complications. Some women continue to breastfeed throughout a pregnancy and then go on to "tandem" nurse. This means the mother breastfeeds more than one child at the same time. Some children do wean themselves once their mother becomes pregnant, possibly because her milk supply drops, or

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they detect a change in the taste of the milk that they don't enjoy. When a breastfeeding mother becomes pregnant and continues to nurse her current baby, the nursing is not a new stimulation and should not cause a problem in the pregnancy for healthy women.

Myth #8: Breastfeeding is painful

Fact: Fear of pain is one of the many reasons women report they did not choose to breastfeed. However, many women experience no pain or difficulty at all with breastfeeding. For some, the first few days may include some slight discomfort and pain. However, severe or ongoing pain is not normal and may indicate a problem. Usually, pain is caused by incorrect positioning or latch-on technique, and can be cleared up with help from a trained counselor. Pain can often be avoided if the mother learns correct positioning and latch before giving birth. Attend a class while you are still pregnant or a support group of breastfeeding mothers to observe successful breastfeeding mothers. Request any assistance you can from trained hospital staff & the local health unit.

Myth #9: You can't breastfeed if your plan to go back to work or school.

Fact: There are several different ways to combine working and breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is not an all or nothing choice. A mother can nurse her baby and give breast milk and formula by bottle. It may be possible to schedule work with a lunch break that allows a mother to go to her baby to nurse. Mothers on the AR WIC program can get a double electric breast pump with a battery option from the health unit to express their milk when away from the baby. Some working mothers may not want to or be able to pump when they are at work. For them, breastfeeding can continue at night and evenings when they are with their babies and formula can be given during the day.

Myth #10: You have to have a perfect diet or your milk won't nourish the baby properly.

Fact: New studies have shown this to be untrue. Even women who are getting a well balanced diet can usually produce nutritious milk for their babies. The nutrients that make up the milk are pulled from the mother's body stores as well as from her diet. It is best to eat right during pregnancy and while breastfeeding to maintain good health for the mother. Occasional lapses, however, are nothing to worry about.

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Myth #11: Breastfeeding makes you fat.

Fact: Breastfeeding will not prevent a mother from getting back to her pre-pregnancy weight. A nursing mother may use an extra 300 to 500 calories every day. If she consumes excessive calories above what she needs to make milk and meet her own needs, the extra may result in pounds gained or no weight loss. Most breastfeeding women actually lose weight while breastfeeding and without any effort. It is wise to lose weight gradually, no more than a one-half to a pound per week. It may take some mothers longer than others to reach their desired weight.

Myth #12: Family members and friends can't bond with a baby if he is breastfeeding.

Fact: There are lots of ways to bond with a newborn. Soothing, rocking, diapering, and burping the new baby are only a few of these activities. Anyone can help take care of the baby and enjoy bonding without depriving the baby of its optimal nutrition and nurturing.

Myth #13: You can't take any medications while you're breastfeeding.

Fact: There are only a few medications that can't be used while breastfeeding. Most medications can be taken safely. A number of resources are available for breastfeeding mothers to call for medication safety information; the doctor, pharmacy, local health unit and the Arkansas WIC 1-800 breastfeeding help-line.

Myth #14: Breastfeeding ties you down.

Fact: It is true that breastfed babies are dependent upon their mothers for their nutrition. This does not mean that a breastfeeding mother must remain housebound and attached to her baby 24 hours a day. After a mother has recovered from the birth, it is not only possible, but usually a lot of fun to take the baby along on errands, visits with friends, walks in the park and go on other outings. A mother can choose to express some of her milk ahead of time to give by bottle or simply use formula.

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Myth #15: Breastfed babies need to be given water or they won't get enough fluid.

Fact:: Giving water to a breastfed baby can cause him to nurse less frequently and not get the nutrition he needs from milk. As a result, the baby may not adequately gain weight. The time the baby spends taking water will also decrease the suckling that stimulates the mother's breasts. This can result in a lower milk production. The breastmilk itself contains plenty of water to take care of a healthy baby's needs.

Myth #16: You must drink lots of fluids or you won't make enough milk

Fact:: This is a long held belief that has no basis. Drinking lots of fluids will not increase the milk. Fluids to satisfy the thirst are a nursing mother's best guide as to how much fluid she needs. Most mothers find they are naturally more thirsty when they are nursing. It is also not beneficial to force fluids in an effort to increase the milk a mother produces. Too much can actually decrease the milk supply. Milk production is controlled by the stimulation and milk removal. Frequent stimulation and effective milk removal will ensure a good milk supply.