



LACTATION INSIGHTS

WELCOME to the Winter, 2008 edition of Lactation Insights! This newsletter is written and published quarterly by Janet to support breastfeeding mothers and their families.

BREASTFEEDING AND THE FLU

Research shows that breastfed infants have fewer and shorter episodes of cold and flu viruses. At this time of the year, there are plenty of viruses going around, so I thought it would be helpful to highlight the positive benefits of continuing to breastfeed during the cold and flu season.

Breastfeeding helps the baby's immune system mature, protecting the baby from viral, bacterial, and parasitic infections. In our family when the nursing baby did get sick, he wasn't nearly as sick as other family members. I stopped feeding solid foods if the baby was eating them and instead we concentrated on the benefits of pure breastmilk when a baby's appetite decreased during an illness.

If a nursing mother is sick, it is best for her baby to continue breastfeeding. The baby has already been exposed to the germs causing the mother's illness, and human milk will help protect her baby. This is not the time to reach for stockpiled breastmilk in the freezer. When germs enter the mother's body, her lymphatic system designs new germ-fighters and sends them to her breasts to provide protection for the baby. These antibodies are provided for every nursing session during an illness.

When the baby is the one who becomes ill, the nursing mother produces

antibodies on demand to the specific germs that challenge her baby. When the baby picks up a germ and passes it to the mother through the breast (or by sharing kisses etc.), the mother's more mature immune system begins to manufacture antibodies to that specific germ. The mother then gives these antibodies back to the baby through her milk the next time the baby feeds at the breast.

The practical application of this fact is that a nursing mother with a child in day care should thoroughly explore the place where her baby spends time, eat a snack, visit the diapering area, and hug all the caregivers, in order to meet the widest possible selection of the germs that her baby encounters every day.

If the breastfed baby is vomiting or has diarrhea, human milk is the best food possible for the baby. As long as a baby can take anything by mouth, it should be human milk (in small, frequent amounts). When a nursing baby is sick, the comfort he receives at the breast may be the most important benefit of all!

HELP DURING COLD AND FLU SEASON

Nursing mothers are often advised by their health care provider that they can take Sudafed for sinus congestion while breastfeeding. The reports on this drug indicate that:

- If Sudafed is taken in the first 2 months of lactation, there is not much effect on the milk supply.
- If Sudafed is taken when the baby is 12-14 months old, mothers experienced a 65% drop in milk production.

Please gather all the facts before taking any drugs or herbal supplements when you are breastfeeding.

Comfort Measures for colds and flu:

If the breastfed baby (or other members of the family) gets sick with a bad cold or the flu, there are comfort measures that you can provide to help make this time less stressful. A detox bath will help anyone who is sick feel better and sleep better at night. Here's what you need:

- A bathtub of warm water
- ½ cup Epsom salts
- ½ cup baking soda
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- 10 drops Lavender essential oil

Put the kids in the bath for 20 minutes and soak away the toxins...how easy is that? (Please use high quality essential oils. Some essential oils are extracted with chemicals and you don't want to add these chemicals to the bath water.)

Another wonderful idea for a child with a stuffy nose or cough is to add 4-6 drops of Rosemary essential oil to a steam vaporizer during the night. You can also put 20 drops of Rosemary essential oil on a washcloth and let the shower water beat on the washcloth while you and the baby stand in the shower or sit in the steamy bathroom.

*I carry both Lavender and Rosemary essential oils which are pure and safe for use with babies and small children.

SLEEPING BABIES

Babies naturally fall asleep while nursing because the hormone cholecystokinin (CCK) is released simultaneously in both mother's and baby's digestive tracts in response to suckling. CCK enhances digestion and absorption of food and makes both mother and baby feel relaxed and satiated. Ahhh!

In 1989, Uvnas-Moberg published a wonderful study on cholecystokinin. This article explains that babies often fall asleep while nursing (when the first rise in CCK occurs in response to suckling). A baby may wake up about 30 minutes later when CCK levels drop. This presents the baby with another opportunity to return to the breast for a second feeding (obtaining the high-fat hindmilk this time). It is the 2nd rise in CCK in response to **fat** in the baby's tummy that enables a baby to fall asleep and stay asleep for a longer period of time. When the baby falls asleep while nursing, this helps a mother to stay close to her baby, protecting him and keeping him warm, after he is finished feeding.

Lucky for many mothers that they figure out how to use nursing as a sleeping aid without ever knowing that CCK exists! I personally remember lying down with my nursing baby at naptime, wondering which one of us would fall asleep first. My baby would nurse to sleep, and if I were tired enough, I would drift off too!

I love to explain this to mothers, so they understand that there is a physical cause for the mother's sleepiness. Some women say that they find breastfeeding "draining", but in my opinion they just haven't understood that they are SUPPOSED to feel sleepy, and they are SUPPOSED to use the nursing time to rest.

Janet Talmadge, BA, IBCLC, RLC
Lactation Innovation
Lactationinnovation.com
(630) 357-0028

P.S. I carry several herbal supplements that are safe for young children, babies and nursing mothers to take which help speed recovery from viruses and the flu. Please call to inquire if you want to learn more about these products.

