

Close  
to  
the  
Heart



La Leche League Asia  
Late-Year 2008  
Volume 9, Number 3

"Breastfeeding  
is mothering  
close to the heart"

# Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces



Unconventional Weaning

# Close to the Heart



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Code of Marketing of Breast Milk  
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Cover Photo: Christine Gross-Loh with Mia

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## Mission Statement

La Leche League International is a non-profit, non-sectarian, organization. Our mission is to help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother. All breastfeeding mothers, as well as future breastfeeding mothers, are welcome to come to our meetings or to call our Leaders for breastfeeding help.

## Contribution Deadlines

**Contributions received by  
1<sup>st</sup> March 2009 will be included  
in the Early-Year 2009 issue.**

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**Article and stories for  
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space available. They may also be  
published in other LLL  
publications

## Editor's Corner

Hello everyone!

The tainted milk scandal in China highlighted the inherent dangers of the formula milk industry. Melamine, an industrial chemical was added to milk, and a result many babies have died and thousands more have been made seriously ill. What a terrible tragedy - so much unnecessary suffering for the children and their families. But how quickly this incident may be forgotten. Already, in Hong Kong, the formula milk companies have increased their advertising reach, with big campaigns centred on Hong Kong's MTR train system. I see a real danger that mothers will be wooed back by these companies, who assure them that the melamine incident was just a blip, and that the formula milk available in Hong Kong today is better than ever.

Yet, just a few weeks ago, a groundbreaking study by American scientists showed that iron fortified formula has led to cognitive delays in babies.\* And the wider health risks associated with formula milk are well documented: formula fed babies are more prone to infections than breastfed babies, they are at greater risk of certain childhood cancers, respiratory and gastrointestinal problems... the list is long and the risks are significant, but somehow this information is not well understood or disseminated in our communities. We can lobby our governments to enforce the International Code for the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which keeps formula companies in check, but realistically, breastfeeding support groups don't have the resources to do much more. So as mothers we must help each other to spread knowledge about the health and emotional advantages of breastfeeding. As a breastfeeding campaign in the United States asserts: Babies were born to be breastfed!

We can also take heart from the stories in this issue of *Close to the Heart*. Two working mothers tell us how they came up with creative ways to get better conditions for breastfeeding mothers at their workplaces. Bonnie Cooper gives us a glimpse into the breastfeeding practices of Muslim mothers in Abu Dhabi and, as all good things must come to an end, we hear about one mother's experience of a very gentle weaning.

2009 gets off to a great start with the La Leche League conference in Hong Kong in early February. More details on page 9 - I hope many of you are able to attend and that we can celebrate the joys of breastfeeding together.

Happy New Year,

**Maggie**

\* Study: Neurodevelopmental Delays Associated With Iron-Fortified Formula for Healthy Infants, Lozoff et. Al.  
Presented at PAS 2008: Pediatric Academic Societies and Asian Society for Pediatric Research Joint Meeting

## Bringing Baby Along - The Baby Room

Sometimes the best ideas are the simplest!

I am a mother of two and have exclusively breastfed both of my children. When I returned to work with my first child, six years ago, I continued to breastfeed. She was eight weeks old when I went back to work, and even though continuing to breastfeed her was definitely possible and worth all the hassle, it wasn't exactly easy. I had to pump during all my breaks and then have the child minder feed her this expressed breast milk. I spent nearly all of my free time locked in a stuffy room on my own, pumping.

With my current baby, things have been much easier. I again returned to work when my baby was very young, and I continued to breastfeed. But this time, I bring my baby to work with me. I am a teacher, and I am lucky enough to work in a school which has developed a "Baby Room," something which I believe could be replicated in any workplace.

What is a Baby Room? Well, obviously, it is a room for babies and their mums and nannies.



Kylie's daughter enjoying the Baby Room

Having a Baby Room at work means that my son is close to me. I know he is safe and well looked after, and I can continue breastfeeding him without the hassle of pumping and sterilising so many bottles. I am happier, and I have more time to spend with my baby. My little one gets to see me more often. It benefits my employer because I am more focused on my work, knowing he is safe and happy just down the hall. It also pays off for my employer because I came back to work after three months, rather than taking a longer maternity leave.

There are some challenges involved. In the beginning I felt like a wet nurse to my baby, as I seldom got time to do anything with him during my breaks except feed him. This feeling lasted for about a month, until we became a more efficient feeding “team.” Even now I miss the social contact with my colleagues that I used to get during break time while eating my snack and lunch with them. Now, I grab my food and run to the Baby Room.

Despite some of the problems involved, having my son in the Baby Room is better than other alternatives. Last month, my baby was ill and stayed at home for five days. On the first two days, I stayed with him, but by the third day he was no longer really ill (he just couldn’t be in contact with other babies). On these days I went to work and left him at home with his nanny. I pumped every morning and evening to make sure there was enough expressed breast milk for him, and I rushed home in a taxi every day at lunchtime to feed him. On the first day, I only just made it back to work on time. On the second, he was fast asleep and wouldn’t feed while sleeping or wake to feed, and on the third day, it took me 20 minutes to find a taxi to bring me home, so I only ended up with 10 minutes to spend with him. These problems made me realise that feeling like a wet nurse or missing out on the lunchroom gossip are minor issues!

Our Baby Room was initiated by parents, and all of the organisation and funding is done by us. We supply our own equipment, and we decide our own policies. The nannies are all hired and paid by the individual baby’s parents. The school merely provides an empty room. This means that the school is not legally responsible should anything happen.

Our policies are simple:

- Only babies, nannies, and parents are allowed in the room;
- Only six babies can be registered to attend at any one time; and
- Once a baby turns one, they can no longer be in our Baby Room.
- All parents must supply basic equipment for their baby, such as a cot, bedding, toys, nappy changing gear, and a play mat for the floor.
- Every baby must have their own nanny, and if a baby is ill s/he must stay at home so as not to infect the other children.

Parents contribute a (very small) monthly fee towards necessary improvements for the room. This money has gone towards painting a mural on the wall and purchasing a fridge, steriliser, microwave, cupboards, storage tubs, a sealed rubbish bin, a water dispenser etc. The school did pay for the room to be carpeted, and had an air-conditioner/heater installed, although we offered to pay for those items ourselves.

The idea is so simple, and yet so unusual. I have never heard of another workplace having such a room. I wasn’t involved in the planning stages, but I am so grateful to those mums and dads who had the idea and convinced the administration to let us implement it. I hope this article encourages more parents to lobby for a Baby Room at their own workplaces. It never hurts to ask!

Sometimes the best ideas are the simplest!

## Unconventional Weaning

July 13, 2006 was a big day. It was complete with two cakes (at separate times) and 20 two- and three-year-olds. Not only did our son, Sky, have a two-year-old birthday party that day, but we were also saying good-bye to breastfeeding. I say “we” because breastfeeding was always a team effort for our family. Everyone was involved - whether it was being quiet, leaving us alone, waking someone up, or just watching in awe of life at its best.

My husband Layton and I spent a lot of time deciding when and how to wean Sky. Our first son, Chaandmon, was a devoted breastfeeder. He breastfed anytime and anywhere: meetings, check-out lines or on the side of the road, until he was three. If it weren't for early contractions from being pregnant with Sky, I don't think I would have weaned him at three.

Sky was the type of child who only breastfed when he was hungry. This was quite a departure from Chaandmon. It actually took me a while to adjust to sleeping and not opening my shirt at every bump, bruise and hurt feeling. At the same time, however, it allowed us to feel confident that a few weeks of gentle weaning would be all that Sky required. So, after several nights of Layton tending to him with water and cuddles, we were ready for July 13.

That night Sky breastfed for the last time. It would be my final time breastfeeding as we had decided Sky would be our last biological child. At the time I didn't realize how emotional it would be.

I loved breastfeeding. I never thought about *not* doing it. Was I ready to finish? After six years of being either pregnant or breastfeeding....yes! But was it difficult to say good-bye? Also, and emphatically, YES!!! Just like Chaandmon had done three years before, Sky kissed and said good-

bye to my breasts and we agreed that they would always be there for him.

I just didn't realize how long they would be there for him.

On July 14, Sky decided he would hold my breasts instead. Layton and I felt this was all right. After all, we had taken away the one thing in his life that was reliable, warm and good! Fabulous! Every morning and every night we snuggled and he held my breasts. He held one for ten minutes and the other for about the same. If he wanted to hold them during the day he would say, “I want the mama.” This has been our name for my breasts since Chaandmon was born. It has worked quite well for breastfeeding toddlers in public. “How cute, he wants YOU.” Indeed!

The following July, Sky turned three. This time it really would be the end, we told him. Another birthday party and two cakes later, I spent the next several nights in our big bed with Sky holding my breasts and Layton sleeping with Chaandmon in his single bed.

At some point during that year we gave up. Layton stopped asking me to set boundaries, and I put Sky to bed while he held my breasts. Sometimes I moved to our bed. Sometimes I spent the night next to Sky.

After a while, holding my breasts became flipping my nipples back and forth (ouch and ugh!), demanding mommy put him to bed and be the first person he saw in the morning. Needless to say, this became a bit tiresome for everyone. Layton and I never experienced this with Chaandmon so this was new ground for us. I wondered and worried that I had weaned Sky too early. Did he need my breasts or me or was he just seeing how far he could push his limits? I spent time reading



Allison with her two sons

books, going to La Leche League meetings, and talking with other mothers. But the more I researched, the more I learned that this is normal and even common.

We decided it was best to start weaning Sky again. I limited and eventually tried to refuse access to "his mama." This worked on and off throughout his third year. I will be the first to admit that I was having trouble saying good-bye. I think I was afraid he wouldn't need me or cuddle anymore if he couldn't hold my breasts.

As you have already calculated, July 2008 has already well and truly passed. Sky is now an inquisitive, willful, and wonderfully busy four-year-old. Are we over "mama"? Almost. I say this because he will still occasionally ask to hold them. I no longer let him, though it is tempting. Instead I distract him, cuddle him, explain that they are busy and belong to me now. Though they don't really feel like part of me after so many years of lending them out, I have a feeling they eventually will.

# Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace

Sarah O'Connor is a teacher of Special Educational Needs at the English Schools Foundation in Hong Kong. She has two boys, Sennen (aged 4) and Perec (aged 22 months). When she returned to work she was determined to continue breastfeeding, and helped her employers formulate a breastfeeding policy. She talked to *Close to the Heart* about her experience.

## **What was your experience when you went back to you work in terms of breastfeeding?**

The first time I found it easier than the second time. I think that was because no one realised what I was doing or how it would impact on things. I am quite a determined person and so I just got on with it. But the second time, there was a lot more resistance. I think people were then aware of what I was going to be doing and the kind of support I was requesting.

## **What did you feel you needed?**

I needed to have a location where I could express - a quiet place with a plug socket for my electric pump. Even this simple thing was not easy. Just having a room wasn't enough, I found that I really needed the support and understanding of my colleagues too; otherwise I would be constantly interrupted. I could not always have a private location and that meant using the resources area in the library, with a good friend on lookout!

## **How did you approach management?**

Both times I went straight to the top and just told them that I would be expressing milk. It was not an easy thing to do! I just had to take a deep breath and say out loud what I had planned - and then I just got out of their office. I didn't want too many questions!

## **Were there any hurdles?**

The biggest hurdles were my colleagues. There were some who were supportive, and I could not have managed without them. But others were not supportive, and they found ways to make this evident to me. I guess it was because of them that I felt a policy was required. Somewhere it needed to say that breastfeeding your baby is important

**Excerpts from the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Policy implemented by the English Schools Foundation, Hong Kong.**

### **5.1 Breast milk expression breaks**

Flexibility is provided for employees to take breaks to express breast milk during the workday. Such breaks should be negotiated between the employee and her manager/supervisor. The negotiations should be on the basis of best intent and consider the needs of the school/organization and the needs of the mother. Up to two break times may be needed during the day, and these may coincide with lunch (in which case some concession may be made) and other breaks or be taken so as not to inconvenience teaching/work activities.

In situations where a mother is expected to work off-site and/or outside normal working hours (e.g. day excursions, overnight trips, external meetings) the employee should work with management to ensure milk expression breaks are possible.

### **5.2 Duration**

It is not expected that a mother would need to express milk for more than one year in order to continue breast feeding.

### **5.3 Suitable location**

Within the confines of the workplace, the employee should have access to a private room with a power-point, lockable door and comfortable chair. Access should be available to a wash basin and ideally a storage area for the breast pump. A refrigerator should also be made available for the storage of milk (see 5.4). If available and appropriate, an employee may use their private office area.

In the interim, a spare room or first aid room may need to be used for this purpose on a temporary basis.

### **5.4 Storage of milk**

Employees may use their own cooler packs to store expressed milk or milk may be stored in a designated refrigerator or freezer. Employees should provide their own containers. Hygiene is the responsibility of the employee.

### **5.5 Education and communication**

Managers and supervisors must be informed of both the policy and the desire of an employee to express milk, and provide support and respect to the mother.

and that it is supported by the company and that procedures and resources were to be put in place to allow and support the mother to breastfeed. For example, one of the hardest things for me to manage was to express milk in my lunch hour, eat lunch and also do a duty. The duty of course was not really a priority and could have been managed by other members of staff.

### **How did you get ideas for the wording of the policy?**

I spent a long time trying to gather information, looking at lots of policies both from within Hong Kong and also abroad. I amalgamated all the information and formed supporting documents. I then approached my staff council and they set up a meeting with the head of Human Resources at the head office. Luckily for me, both the head of the staff council and the head of Human Resources were extremely supportive.

After one or two meetings the head of H.R. took over and wrote the policy himself. I believe that he did his own investigations into the practicalities of implementation and questioned each of the principles of the schools. The policy was submitted and then approved. However, just at this crucial time, he left the organisation and we had to go almost back to the beginning with a new head of Human Resources. He had his own take and reworded the policy, removing one of the key facets which allowed the baby to be brought onto site to be breastfed. The updated policy was then approved and subsequently released to all schools.

*If you would like to find out more about breastfeeding policies in the workplace you can contact Sarah at:  
[sarah.louise.oconnor@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.louise.oconnor@gmail.com)*

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### **Are you happy with the final policy?**

It was a long road, but I am happy with the results. It is not perfect - well, it is not my original policy and wording. But I do feel that if you read behind the words to the essence of the document, we have come along way. Perhaps someone else might take on the next step of updating and adding in the missing pieces.

### **Would you encourage other working mothers to do the same?**

Yes, go for it. There are so many people that have benefited from this process and as a result I believe that more babies will be breastfed for a longer period of time. That feels pretty good. Any tips for them? Please feel free to contact me if you are interested in the research I collected or support on the process.

### **How important for you has it been to continue breastfeeding whilst at work?**

I have found that breastfeeding is an essential part of being a working mother. It has allowed me to bond closely with my children. It was harder at first as I was expressing for the first year whilst at work, but then I was able to continue a breastfeeding relationship with my children without expressing. That is worth celebrating!

## Pause for Thought

**"Sleep problems occur when your child's night waking exceeds your ability to cope."**

Dr William Sears, Nighttime Parenting.

# In the News

## La Leche League bids farewell to Betty Wagner Spandikow



La Leche League International and the world lost an amazing woman when Betty Wagner Spandikow, of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, passed away October 26, 2008. Betty was co-founder of La Leche League International and co-author of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, which has over 2 million copies in print.

In 1956, Betty Wagner and six other women met in Franklin Park, Illinois to share information on how to successfully breastfeed their babies. The group quickly attracted the attention of other women and over time became the La Leche League we know today.

Betty was a member of the Board of Directors of La Leche League, and at various times served as Treasurer, Business Manager, and Executive Director, a title she held for 19 years until she retired. Betty initiated flexi hours and a family-friendly workplace in the '60s, long before they became the popular perks they are today. Business hours at the La Leche League International office were set to allow mothers to be home with their children after school. Born Betty

Redmond in September of 1923, and raised in the Chicago area, Betty went on to work in accounting before starting her family. After raising seven children, and being intimately involved in the business side of La Leche League, Betty retired as Executive Director of La Leche League at age 70.

## Wakkanai Cooking Class



La Leche League Wakkanai group got together to share the joys of a cooking class in November. A collection of mothers, babies, children, aprons and cookbooks met at the Higashi Chiku Kyoten Center to cook up fried rice, hot plate pizza, tofu cake and Okara crackers. We had an afternoon of lovely food and great company.

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party

La Leche League Hong Kong celebrated it's 30th Birthday at the Helena May club in Central on a perfect autumn afternoon. There was plenty of toys and soft mats indoors so that the smaller children were well occupied; outdoors there was a treasure hunt and plenty of space to run around. We had a silent auction and some of those games where you have to guess the weight of a fruit basket and the number of nuts in a jar. A children's music centre: Catherine from Kindermusik kindly provided some musical entertainment and had the little ones singing and dancing in the middle of the room. In Hong Kong we have a lot of members who work full time and aren't able to come to the regular meetings, so this was a great chance for the working mums to meet some of the other members. It was great to have so many supportive Dads turn up too. What a party! Many thanks to all who helped out and here's to the next one...



## The La Leche League Breastfeeding Conference: *Sign up NOW!!*

**Breastfeeding: Traditional Food the Natural Way:** La Leche League Asia & Middle East proudly presents it's first ever breastfeeding conference in Hong Kong, with an international line up of breastfeeding experts from Asia and overseas.

Date: Thursday & Friday 5th & 6th February.  
Venue: Royal Garden, 69 Mody Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Hong Kong.

**Nancy Mohrbacher** IBCLC will be discussing the Seven Natural Laws for Nursing Mothers, introducing new and effective ways of teaching breastfeeding, babies inborn feeding skills and much more. **Elizabeth Pantley** will share her secrets on gentle ways to help your baby sleep through the night. **Dr Chen Chao-huei** will discuss how breastfeeding aids brain development, **Dr Katsumi Muzuno** looks at the milk ejection reflex and how it impacts on nipple confusion. **Dr Brooke Schumacher** examines how our birth choices affect breastfeeding and there are also sessions on the relevance of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, kangaroo mother care, latch mechanics, vegetarian baby and child, and attachment parenting.

Something for everybody! Come and join us at this exciting event! For more information go to [www.lllhk.org](http://www.lllhk.org) and click on 'conference'.

La Leche League would like to thank

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Dr. Patrick Chan  
Dr. Sally Ferguson  
Dr. Laurence Hou  
Dr. Paul Leung  
Dr. Alfred Tam  
Dr. Tampa Thondup

For their financial contribution toward the conference.

# Postcard from ABUDHABI, United Arab Emirates

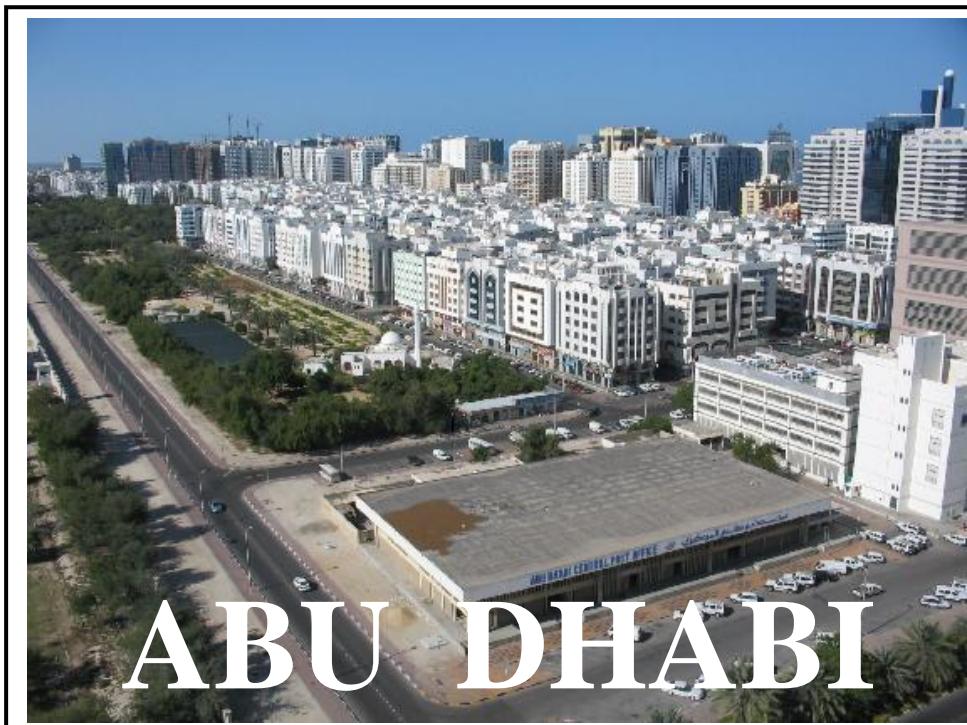
I am lying on my side with my toddler cuddled into my back. In my arms is my baby whose thumb sucking is getting louder and louder and I'm trying to ignore it and get some more sleep. It is almost morning and the dawn prayer starts, amplified into our apartment's bedroom from the green mosque outside - 'our mosque.' Salat is the name for the prayers we hear five times every day. I am not religious but these prayers are beautiful and I love listening to them. I pull baby Matariki closer in to me and replace her thumb with my breast; she feeds hungrily and falls back into a deep sleep. We all get some more rest before

we greet the new day. The sun is shining hot as always.

Marhaba! I am Bonnie a New Zealander living in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. Abu Dhabi is a small Island and the population is around 950,000. Since the 1970's the Emirates have grown massively and continue to do so. Because of its oil wealth Abu Dhabi has become a modern westernized city. I moved to Dubai at the start of 2007 and then to Abu Dhabi in January this year. My son Cosmo was one year old when we left New Zealand where

we had been involved with La Leche League. On May 24th my daughter Matariki was born quickly and gently here in Abu Dhabi. She was born in the renowned public hospital Al Corniche which sees approximately 1,000 births each month. The hospital looks out over the Arabian Gulf; the turquoise water sparkles like the gold which is plentiful here. Some of the great things about the Corniche hospital are that it has been

awarded Baby Friendly Status by UNICEF - this means that the hospital supports breastfeeding, the hospital policies facilitate breastfeeding and all the staff members have received training in this area.



Also, midwives can deliver babies unlike in the private hospitals. Men are not routinely allowed in the hospital but if you arrange it they can attend prenatal appointments with you and be with you during established labour and delivery. However they have to enter through a separate entrance to the hospital when called. Obviously this can be a big problem for many women who want their husbands with them at all times but luckily for me I arrived at the hospital fully dilated so there was no time for segregation!

*Matariki entered the world peacefully, we had skin to skin contact and she breastfed eagerly right away. Cosmo had had difficulty latching so I was surprised and pleased Matariki fed well from the start and her suck was so strong. I thought I was an experienced breastfeeder after feeding Cosmo well into his second year, but this time I had a new set of hurdles to overcome.*

*Nipple damage, persistent drug resistant thrush and two mini nursing strikes have all tested me over the last five months. Because of the hot and humid desert climate here candida\* affects many women and babies. Thankfully I had the Baby Friendly hospital to go to, where free of charge, lactation consultants are available to help mothers out with any breastfeeding problems or questions they have. And of course we now have LLL here which started in September this year.*

*Being a Muslim country, lots of expat mothers are not sure how breastfeeding in public will be received. Most of the Muslim women cover themselves ranging from a colourful headscarf to the complete black burqa. However it is a tolerant society and as long as you are discreet, breastfeeding in public is no different here in Abu Dhabi than in any other modern society. In fact the holy Quran is very supportive of breastfeeding and encourages breastfeeding for two years saying, "The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of sucking" [ Surah al-Baqarah 2:233].*

*One of the nicest things I've heard is that in the Hadith, a book of sayings and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, it says a woman will receive a good deed for every drop of breast milk she feeds her baby! It is actually considered a child's right to be breastfed. Women can choose not to fast in Ramadan while breastfeeding and make up the fasting days at another time if they feel it is best. I have heard women's prayer rooms are a handy feeding space when out and about. I don't think there are any statistics but*

*I imagine Arab women breastfeed for much longer than western expatriates. In my antenatal group of seven mothers only two of us are breastfeeding now that our babies are four to five months old. The local women do seem to keep quite separate from foreigners so many elements of their lives and culture remain a mystery to us expatriates.*

*The UAE is a great place to have children. Children and babies are cherished and welcomed everywhere you go. Despite the hurdles I've faced it is all worth it to see my little girl growing bigger every day, her chubby body, great gulps and sighs of delight, warm cuddles and my milk dripping down her face. These things all make breastfeeding such a delicious experience for us both. Breastfeeding gives me peace. I hope to feed Matariki for as long as she desires. The local culture and religion here have touched me, and an element of my spirituality comes from my devotion to breastfeeding, and breastfeeding as a way of mothering my children.*



**Bonnie Cooper - Abu Dhabi Group**

**Editor's Note:**

\*Candida is a yeast fungus which causes thrush.

# Magic Ingredients!

Compiled by **Maggie Holmes**  
*Leader with the Hong Kong Group*



## Lungs 'boosted' by breastfeeding

The sheer physical effort involved in breastfeeding may leave babies with stronger lungs well into childhood, researchers suggest.

A study of 10-year-olds on the Isle of Wight in the UK found much better lung function in those breastfed for at least four months. The study suggests that the different mechanics and duration of sucking may be partly responsible.

Dr. Wilfried Karmaus from the University of South Carolina, USA reports that children who were breastfed for at least four months demonstrated a significantly larger lung capacity at age 10 years compared with a similar group that had not been breastfed.

The researchers noted that breastfed infants get about an hour of exercise daily for the first four months, with six to eight feedings lasting about eight minutes each. That is nearly twice the length of individual bottle feedings, which average about 4.4 minutes and require less effort.

Studies have established that breastfeeding protects babies from respiratory problems early in life, but the relationship with lung power later in childhood is less clear-cut.

A total of 1,456 babies from the Isle of Wight were followed all the way through to their 10th year to test this. A third of them had been breastfed for at least four months, and on average, these children could blow out more air after taking a deep breath, and they could blow it out faster. This was true regardless of whether their mother was asthmatic or suffered from allergies.

The USC scientists found that children who had been breastfed for less than four months had improved lung capacity, but it wasn't significantly different from the lung function of children who weren't breastfed at all.

Dr Elaine Vickers, from Asthma UK, said that the study added to the evidence that breastfeeding has "long-lasting benefits" for children. She said: "While the results of the study don't focus specifically on asthma, the researchers were able to demonstrate that children breastfed for four months or longer had better lung function than those who weren't breast-fed at all, or who were breast-fed for less than four months."

Sources: Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina, U.S.A.

<http://www.sph.sc.edu/news/karmaus.htm>

<http://www.asthma.org.uk> <http://www.asthma.org.uk>

# Questions Mothers Ask

**Q:** I am still breastfeeding my one year old child.

Can I get pregnant again while still breastfeeding?

Will it be safe for my unborn baby?

**A:** Many mothers do become pregnant with a second child while still breastfeeding. There is no need to stop breastfeeding before getting pregnant and no need to stop breastfeeding during pregnancy. If you have started menstruating again, then you can assume you are fertile.

If a mother is frequently breastfeeding and spending much of her time physically close to the baby then the average time for the menstruation to return is 14 months. However, remember that's an **average**, so some mothers will get the menses earlier than that, and some later.

It's worth noting that if milk is not removed from the breast for more than six hours - either by expressing or breastfeeding directly, then the mother is more likely to begin menstruating again. So, if a mother wants to conceive a second child quite soon after the birth of her first baby, but has not got the menstruation back, she could try partially weaning. If the baby goes for six hours or more during the day or at night without breastfeeding, she may be able to encourage the menstruation to return. Of course, this should be done with sensitivity to the baby's needs and may be easier when the baby is six months or older and has started solids.



Some mothers may worry that breastfeeding while pregnant could cause a miscarriage, however there is no evidence to support this concern. Uterine contractions stimulated by breastfeeding usually pose no danger to the unborn baby and do not increase the risk of premature delivery. Although uterine contractions are experienced during breastfeeding, they are a normal part of pregnancy. Uterine contractions also occur during sexual activity, which most couples continue during pregnancy.

The American Academy of Family Physicians says in its 2002 statement on breastfeeding:

*"Breastfeeding during a subsequent pregnancy is not unusual. If the pregnancy is normal and the mother is healthy, breastfeeding during pregnancy is the mother's decision."*

There are currently no specific medical guidelines that define in which circumstances it could be considered risky to continue breastfeeding and different doctors are likely to vary widely in their recommendations. If you have had repeated miscarriages in the past, it may be worth talking to your doctor about this, but otherwise, the assumption can be that it is safe to breastfeed during pregnancy.



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