

## **Breastfeeding, and dreading every feed? You're not alone.**

The World Health Organization describes breastfeeding as “an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants”. There is some consolation in knowing that more Canadian women than ever before begin nursing soon after their babies are born. Statistics Canada reports that 85% of women who had a baby in the previous five years since its 2003 study attempted to breastfeed their infant. This is a significant shift since the mid 1960s when the comparable percentage was around 25%. But, before we pat ourselves on the back for doing such a splendid job, note that the key word here is ‘attempted’. Although 85% of the women had attempted to breastfeed their infant, 22% had stopped within the first month and only 47% had breastfed for six months or more. Why, when all the research and advice says that breastfeeding is the best way to go?

Although the Statistics Canada research cites the most common reasons for stopping as “not enough milk” or “child weaned itself”, some experts believe there are other reasons. Dr. Jack Newman, a renowned expert on breastfeeding is convinced that the reasons for stopping are often due to poor support, and that advice mothers get in hospitals is appallingly bad. Many mothers I have spoken to speak of the discomfort, severe pain, and infections associated with feeding and the frustration of not being able to get good advice.

I thought breastfeeding would be a breeze, after all nature has equipped us for this! My daughter started off fine, or seemed to, but within a few weeks we ran into problems. I was determined to breastfeed, felt guilty about even contemplating formula, yet I began to dread every feed. The pain was excruciating during feeding and the discomfort persisted throughout the day. We talked to a nurse, a midwife and my family physician, but to no avail. Family and friends were unable to provide much guidance: I had lost my mother several years earlier, my mother-in-law had not breastfed her children, my sister had not encountered any problems, my cousin had to just tolerate the pain because she was unable to get proper help, and our friends had not started families yet. I was about to give up when I heard about La Leche League. I looked up the organization online and went to my first LLL meeting with my husband and daughter. I found out quickly that I wasn't alone in having problems with breastfeeding, and was relieved, yet anxious, to learn that I should be able to breastfeed without discomfort. I also found out that Dr. Newman states: “there is no reason 99 percent of women shouldn't be able to breastfeed exclusively to six months”.

Through LLL, I found a lactation consultant who I was comfortable with and who understood what I was going through. The \$35 I spent on this private consultation has to be the best investment I've ever made. Within a few minutes, Marriane solved the problem: a poor latch. We tested out various nursing positions and less than an hour later we were on our way. Within a day or two,

the pain was gone, and my daughter was feeding and sleeping better. We had planned on breastfeeding for around two years but my daughter weaned herself at around 20 months. We loved the time we spent together and I am convinced that the special relationship we share is in part due to our time together while she was nursing. So, all of you out there who are dreading the next feed, the pain and discomfort is not normal. You may need to get help, and get help sooner rather than later. Contact a support group such as La Leche League, visit [breastfeedingonline.com](http://breastfeedingonline.com) or find a lactation consultant through a site such as [breastfeeding.com](http://breastfeeding.com). Breastfeeding should and can be a great experience for you and your infant.

*Kalpna Solanki BSc MBA CPHI(C) has a four year old daughter who was exclusively breastfed for 6 months. Kalpna supports the guidelines promoting exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and is the President of BOBOBABY, a company that manufactures frozen organic baby food for babies 6 months and up.*

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