Answers for the Anxious: Helping Moms Cope
With Breastfeeding in the Early Days

Presented by: Cathy Carothers, IBCLC, FILCA
Every Mother, Inc.
cathy@everymother.org

Learning Objectives:
1. Identify at least two causes of the following concerns mothers might face in the early days of breastfeeding: sore nipples, infant refusal to latch, fussy baby, concerns about milk production, decision to only pump, decision to breastfeeding and use formula simultaneously, engorgement, and maternal meltdown, and at least two strategies for addressing each concern.

2. Name two strategies for helping a mother gain confidence in the early days of breastfeeding.

A Good Detective:
- Asks the right questions
- Never makes assumptions
- Looks for hidden motives
- Examines the evidence
- Determines the most important information to communicate

Scenario: “Ouch! This hurts!”
- Some causes of pain to consider:
  - Incorrect positioning/latch
  - Other nipples have been introduced
  - Thrush
  - Tongue tie
  - Anatomical anomalies
  - Bacterial infection
- Tips to try:
  - Correct positioning
  - Laid-back breastfeeding
  - Skin to skin care
• Oral assessment
• Taking a breastfeeding break
• Medications as indicated

Scenario: “He won’t latch!”
  ▪ Mother factors:
    • Engorgement
    • Flat/inverted nipples
    • Fast flow of milk
  ▪ Baby factors:
    • Nipple preference
    • Birth trauma
    • Baby isn’t ready
    • Premature or weak suck
  ▪ Tips to try:
    • Skin to skin care
    • Following feeding cues
    • Breastfeeding before baby is fully awake
    • Feeding baby while coaxing to the breast

Scenario: “I’ve had enough!”
  ▪ Why babies cry
    • Hungry
    • Need comfort or pain relief
    • Need diaper change
    • Too hot or too cold
    • Irritated by exposure to fabrics and disruptions
  ▪ Tips to try:
    • Skin to skin care
    • Repetitive motions
    • Swaddling (with caution)
    • Observing feeding cues

Scenario: “Is he getting enough?”
  ▪ Ways to know baby gets enough
  ▪ Appropriate weight gain for the breastfed infant
  ▪ Breast compressions
Visual aids ("pour offs", rice/beans, etc.)

Scenario: “I’m just going to pump”
- Reasons mothers pump
  - Breastfeeding got off to a rocky start
  - Perception that pumping will be easier
  - Sexual abuse
  - Desire to measure what baby gets
- Tips to try:
  - Frequent milk expression
  - Power pumping
  - Hands-on pumping
  - Support!

Scenario: “I want to do both”
- Reasons mothers supplement from the beginning
  - Doubt their ability to make milk
  - Perception that it will be easier
  - Family pressure
  - Returning to work/school
- Tips to try:
  - Explore reasons for doing both
  - Clarify her options so she makes an informed choice
  - Encourage exclusive breastfeeding during the first month
  - Connect her to support from peers who have made it work

Scenario: “My breasts feel like two croquet balls”
- Reasons:
  - Inadequate milk transfer
  - Missed feedings in the early days
  - Normal fullness vs. engorgement
- Tips to try:
  - Warmth before feeding; cold after feedings
  - Hand expression to soften areola

Mommy Meltdown
- The power of affirmation
- Showing moms she is surrounded by a team – she is not alone
• Connecting her to support

References


