

Eimear's Breastfeeding Story



Me feeding Francesca on Christmas Day 2008. I like this picture as it shows how discreet you can be.

My name is Eimear, I am 31, married with three beautiful healthy daughters and here is my breastfeeding story.

When I became pregnant with my first child I knew that I was going to breastfeed. I had seen my sister do it with my niece and I had seen posters quoting 'Breast is Best.' I also read that if your partner has allergies then you can reduce the chances of your child having them by breastfeeding, I was sold. However no one had ever told me how and why to breastfeed and it never occurred to me to ask. I thought that it would just happen.

When I gave birth to my first daughter I was over the moon. I did skin to skin and she seemed to latch on with a bit of help from the Midwife. I thought this is great it's so easy! But that night all she did was either cry or feed. I knew it would be a few days until my milk came in but it just felt like there was nothing

there especially as she cried all the time.

In the hospital I didn't get any help with latching on apart from the initial help from the delivery midwife and when I was discharged they just wanted to know if she was bottle or breastfed. I wanted to keep going but after a few days I was in so much pain and I couldn't get her to latch on properly that I rang the Birth Centre in tears late one night.

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They told me to come in and the Midwife helped me to hand express then she syringed fed my baby. That night we all had the best nights sleep for a while and I started to feel better. By the morning the Midwife who had helped me had gone home and the Midwife who took over was very busy. I didn't want to be a nuisance so we left thinking that things would be ok. They weren't of course. My toes used to curl up when I was feeding, I was in so much pain, I had bleeding cracked nipples and a very unhappy baby.

I used to feel uncomfortable feeding in public and I thought everyone could see what I was doing and I also hated lifting my top up and showing my 'jelly belly.' I started to feel trapped by breastfeeding and couldn't get a minute to myself as this new baby had totally turned my world upside down.

I still didn't want to give up breastfeeding but one night my husband and I decided that we had to do something, so off he went to buy bottles and formula. She started to have them on a night and over the weeks had more through the day. At this stage I got Mastitis and then I finally gave up just before she was 4 months old. I felt terribly guilty but just didn't know what to do about it. There were no groups to go to and I didn't know who to turn to. My family had all been very supportive and none of them made me feel uncomfortable, but not having them near made me feel isolated. I really thought that I wasn't producing enough milk. **If only I knew then what I know now!**

When I had my second daughter I was more determined to succeed. I bought 'breastfeeding tops' to hide my embarrassment, and read what I could about breastfeeding. This time it worked like a dream. I was more confident and my daughter took to it so well I went on to feed her until she was 13 months.

I had to return to work when she was seven months old and just couldn't express enough milk for her to keep her going through the day so she had formula milk when I couldn't be with her. I was still able to feed her in the morning and last thing at night, so we were happy at that. If I didn't have to return to work and if I could have expressed enough then, formula milk would not have been an option as we were both doing really well with breastfeeding.

// Breastfeeding is giving your child the best possible start in life. //

By the time I had my third daughter I felt a bit of an expert! How wrong was I?! I went to see the Breastfeeding Link Workers after my antenatal appointments so I knew there would be a support group to go along to after the birth. After she was born we did skin to skin and she fed very well to begin with but as she was premature she had jaundice and had low blood sugar levels. I was advised to keep feeding her but the Paediatricians recommended to top her up with formula milk, until one Midwife asked me if I wanted to express and give her that instead.

After we left hospital things were going well. I have had a few wobbles but having the Breastfeeding Link Workers and the support group there has really helped. It's been tiring having 2 other children and still feeding a baby. I have been tempted to give a bottle but I have always been glad that I haven't. Besides it isn't always the answer.

My third daughter is now just over 5 months old and is still fully breastfed. I feel very proud to have breastfed my daughters and only wish I could have done it longer for my first. Going to the support group made me realise that there is so much more to breastfeeding, it takes practice and patience but I have always known that it's the best feeling in the world when it goes right and it's giving your child the best possible start in life.

I hope that my daughters continue to do this for their children, they already do to their dolls!
