

My Breastfeeding Story – By Vicky Smith

My story goes something like this. In 2007 I fell pregnant and knew pretty much from the start that I wanted to breastfeed. I'm still not sure what sparked my passion as not one of my relatives had breastfed their babies, and so I was entering the unknown.

In April 2008 my daughter Megan, was born and I thought that feeding her would be the easiest and most natural thing possible but from the off we encountered problems. She was delivered onto my tummy as I'd planned and we had lots of skin to skin, she latched pretty much straight away and I thought we had got off to a flying start, but by 1am that night (she was born at 7.36am) she had only fed once and I was beginning to become worried.

The midwives advised more skin to skin and Megs and myself were both undressed to see if this would urge her to root. Thankfully she did and again she started to feed. The next day we were discharged from and off I went, one very happy, very proud mummy! **But it didn't last.** By the time Meg's was 3 days old I was ready for giving up. My nipples were cracked, sore and bleeding and at every feed I would sit and cry.

"I so badly wanted to breastfeed Megan and I was determined not to give up so easily".

That night I took a trip to my local Tesco and bought a book all about breastfeeding. I read the book from cover to cover and it instilled a little of my confidence. I learned that she wasn't attaching properly and followed the diagrams of how to attach her. It worked and a few days later my nipples were much better and feeding was going great!

Unfortunately however, at 19 days **Megan was diagnosed with reflux** and things went downhill from there. I was advised at the time by the doctor to express my milk to mix in the Gaviscon she was given. I did as advised and within a week every feed she was having was in a bottle. Yes it was still my milk but the **magic of her nestling up to me was lost** and when I tried to feed her again myself she just wouldn't latch.

At 6 weeks I stopped feeding Megan. **I was devastated** and didn't really have anyone to turn to for support. I wasn't aware of the fabulous support groups out there and when I turned to family members was just told things like "she'll settle better if you stop feeding her" or "you'll have a better routine if she's bottlefed".

My husband was great and told me I had to do the best for Megs and that I'd given her the best start in life, which I now know is true but back then I felt like a failure.

A few weeks later I met a friend who introduced me to breastfeeding support groups. It was through attending these groups that I completed my La Leche League Peer supporter training, and although I had stopped feeding Megan long before this, had a fire inside to support other mums who may be struggling as I was. I have now been attending various support groups on a weekly basis for just over a year and have met some amazing friends along the way.



In January this year (2010) I gave birth to my second baby. A beautiful baby boy called Oliver. Breastfeeding was the only option for me and now at 13 weeks we are going strong.

Through the support of other mums, breastfeeding link workers and the knowledge I have gained since completing my training, feeding this time has been a breeze and I am enjoying it immensely.

There are still trying times, like at 4am when I'm exhausted and Oliver is on his fourth feed of the night, but I just have to think what an amazing start in life I am giving him and how well he is growing (he's a whopping 14lb 4oz all from my breasts!) to know that it's worth it!

Things haven't really changed since first time round and I still get well-meaning family members (or family in-law members) offering me their "advice" but this time I have the confidence, knowledge and experience to thank them kindly for their opinion, **hold my head high and carry on as I am.** I know this time I'm doing it right!

"The best piece of information I can offer any breastfeeding mum is to trust your baby and your body. They are designed to work in harmony"