

The First 4 Weeks Postpartum The Mother's Breastfeeding Concerns and Support

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BACKGROUND

- 79% of the nation's mothers initiate breastfeeding after the birth of their babies.
- 49.4% continue to breastfeed and 18.8% continue to exclusively breastfeed for the recommended duration of six months remains.
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014)
- On average 11-18% of women wean or stop exclusive breastfeeding during the first 4 weeks (Cameron, Hesketh, Ball, Crawford, & Campbell, 2010; Sheehan, Watt, Krueger, & Sword, 2006) whereas some studies have noted attrition rates as low as 5% (Tahir & Al-Sadat, 2013) and as high as 34% (Semenic, Loiselle, Gottlieb, 2008)
- Since 1990 some qualitative breastfeeding research has been performed, but the quantity is still sparse and lacking in the first four weeks postpartum.

OBJECTIVE

The first four weeks postpartum are critical for establishing successful breastfeeding because many women wean or stop exclusive breastfeeding during this time. This study explored the breastfeeding concerns of mothers during the first 4 weeks postpartum and the support sought for those concerns.

PARTICIPANTS

Four mothers, recruited from central Indiana in 2014 through social media or word of mouth.

Inclusion criteria:

- Women in their first four to six weeks postpartum.
- Delivered full term healthy babies.
- Discharged from the hospital breastfeeding.

METHODS

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted and data were analyzed using content analysis.

1. Interview transcripts were first coded.
2. Codes with similar meaning were grouped into categories.
3. Categories sharing similar features were again collapsed into common themes.

RESULTS

Table 1: Breastfeeding Concerns

Theme 1: Infant breastfeeding difficulties	
Subthemes	Representative Quotes
Latch	<p>Just the fact that she wouldn't latch on and I was worried that she wasn't going to gain any weight. (ID 1, p. 2)</p> <p>When I was ... well, since we were having problems latching, when I was discharged, that was definitely my concern. (ID 2, p. 3)</p> <p>His latch wasn't really painful in the beginning, but it was pinching and I figured it would hurt. I was out of practice for about four and a half years, but just after the second week when I kept hurting I realized that something was probably wrong, but looked at his mouth and, yes, it was tight and it was confirmed by the dentist as well. (ID 3, p. 1)</p>
Theme 2: Breast complications related to breastfeeding	
Subthemes	Representative Quotes
Nipple pain with feeding	<p>I felt like we were finally getting a good latch, but because of that, I had very sore nipples. (ID 2, p. 1)</p> <p>His latch wasn't really painful in the beginning, but it was pinching and I figured it would hurt. (ID 3, p. 1)</p> <p>I really don't know [how long the pain lasted], but it takes time because I remember sometimes if it was time for me to breastfeed I was like, oh, my God. I would feel that pain all the time, but as time goes on there was no pain anymore. (ID 4, p. 5)</p>
Nipple trauma	<p>We actually, when I left [the hospital], like I said, my nipples were really sore and cracked already. On night number two, after we came home, I fed her and when I pulled her off my nipple was actually bleeding. (ID 2, p. 3)</p>
Theme 3: Maternal concerns related to milk production	
Subthemes	Representative Quotes
Infant milk intake	<p>I think everything was related around breastfeeding, especially making sure she was getting enough to eat. (ID 2, p. 1)</p> <p>Because the way she was acting. She was acting like she wanted something to eat, but nothing was coming out from my. (ID 4, p. 4)</p>
Milk supply	<p>Yes, I had to switch to the supplementing because I wasn't producing enough milk. (ID 1, p. 3)</p> <p>I was really concerned us coming home that I wasn't getting enough milk. (ID 2, p. 1)</p> <p>The first time when I get home from the hospital there was no milk coming out. She would want to eat all the time because I think the milk was less and then later on it was okay. (ID 4, p. 2)</p>

Table 2: Breastfeeding Support

Theme 1: Breastfeeding support	
Subthemes	Representative Quotes
Professional support	<p>I went to my OB and talked to the nurses there. I did talk to a lactation consultant and got advice for both of them. (ID 1, p. 1)</p> <p>[Lactation consultant's name] or [Lactation consultant's name], the two nurses at [hospital name] that are the lactation specialists. (ID 2, p. 4)</p> <p>The biggest problem I had was the tongue tie. The lactation consultant, yes, that was where I went to for that. She gave me some resources and she did look at him in his mouth. It was a little tight. (ID 3, p. 3)</p>
Informational support	<p>Facebook groups, friends. (ID 1, p. 4)</p> <p>I did some internet research and tried to find some reliable websites about breastfeeding and that helped too. I actually did some looking on Pinterest too and that helped a lot. Yes, internet was probably one of the bigger things I used. (ID 2, p. 4)</p> <p>I think Kelly moms or Kelly's mom or something like that was actually a website recommended by one of the lactation nurses at the hospital. She said it's pretty credible information, and that's what she would recommend she said if I didn't do internet research. So I used that website quite a bit. (ID 2, p. 5)</p> <p>I actually joined the Indiana Lip and Tongue Tie Baby Facebook page and that's where I found the dentist I then took him to. (ID 3, p. 1)</p> <p>I looked at pictures of tongue tied and looked a babies online and compared what he looked like to them. (ID 3, p. 1)</p>
Family support	<p>My grandma is staying with us through the winter, so that's been a big help just have a lot support if I need to go lay down, if I need to take a break. If he's fussy, then I have people around me who can hold him, so it's not just me and him all day so I have a lot of support. (ID 3, p. 6)</p> <p>I just talked to my mom. I asked my mom anyway. (ID 4, p. 4)</p>

CONCLUSIONS

- Mothers identified concerns related to themselves and their infants with respect to breastfeeding in the first four weeks postpartum.
- Concerns indicate the women's struggle with establishing a successful breastfeeding pattern and one that is compromised by infant latch difficulty, nipple pain and inadequate milk production.
- Support was sought at multiple levels from health care professionals to social media.
- The findings suggest that support from health care professionals who provide valuable information is important.
- Postpartum women also utilize other support methods when encountering breastfeeding concerns in the first four weeks postpartum.
- Interventions to assist postpartum women with establishing breastfeeding outside of the hospital setting need to consider using social media and social networks as resources for breastfeeding information and support.

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