

A bonding experience

Before I ever became pregnant I knew I wanted to breastfeed. I had read that it was better for the baby and helped the mother to recover from the birth much more quickly. Add to this the fact that I am a woman who is comfortable in her own skin, with no hang-ups about using my breasts as nature intended and it really was a no brainer for me. I was to be a breastfeeding mum, simple as that. Of course, life is never simple and breastfeeding, when the time came, proved an uphill struggle until I met Mandy Abbett, a Sure Start Infant Feeding Specialist from Chesterfield. Mandy changed everything and that's why I nominated her for the Infacol Baby Bonding Award 2008. She won the award and this is my story.

I became pregnant in August 2007 and had a healthy, normal pregnancy. In May 2008, my gorgeous little boy Bradley was born at 7lb 1oz and it was love at first sight for both mother and father. It was an uncomplicated delivery at the Chesterfield Royal Hospital and I was keen to put my baby on the breast as soon as possible. The pain I felt after feeding Bradley a few times was awful, it made my toes curl and I used to dread the latching-on moment even though I was as determined as ever to feed him myself. The hospital staff were busy and had little time for mums who didn't find breastfeeding a breeze. Whenever I asked for help, a midwife or a nurse would come by and push Bradley's head onto my breast and then leave me to it. I realised they were rushed off their feet and frankly a mum with a healthy baby who was having a few small problems with breastfeeding was bottom of the priority pile, but I couldn't help feeling very alone, miserable and frustrated. As I said to my partner Matt: "This isn't how it's supposed to be."

I left hospital 24 hours after Bradley's birth and despite the sore nipples I carried on feeding him at home. Breastfeeding was not a bonding experience for me at this stage. I would struggle to get Bradley latched on, wince with pain as his little mouth fixed on the nipple and suffer so much soreness afterwards. By day three, I was ready to throw in the towel. I shared my anxiety with my community midwife who told me that some babies find it hard to latch-on and feed properly, but it could be sorted and the first



Progressing well: Bradley and mother Lianne enjoy a cuddle.

Lianne Newman Mother of Bradley



Lianne Newman, Matthew and Bradley Nash with Clare Young, Group Marketing Manager at Forest Laboratories, presenting the Infacol Baby Bonding Award 2008 to Infant Feeding Specialist, Mandy Abbett.

thing I should do was to see Mandy Abbett at Sure Start. I rushed off to see Mandy that same day and what happened next proved to be my turning point.

Mandy wasn't patronising, she didn't make me feel guilty or inadequate and I didn't feel I needed to suffer in silence. She looked at Bradley and told me that he had tongue-tie but I could still feed him. The 'exaggerated-latch method' she showed me worked a treat. I was shocked that breastfeeding was painless. I even laughed out loud! There I was, sitting comfortably with Bradley snuggled up to me and it felt right for the first time, and no pain.

Mandy also arranged for Bradley to see a wonderful surgeon who decided his tongue-tie needed surgical treatment. The procedure was very simple and within days Bradley was feeding beautifully and better than ever before, I had total engorgement again and he was sleeping longer which was a welcome bonus. Even at this stage Mandy was incredibly supportive and helped me with a pump to ease the discomfort of engorged breasts. I was well on the road to being a breastfeeding mum, Bradley was gaining weight and the bond between us was growing stronger every day.

I would recommend breastfeeding to anyone and I would say don't give up. If it hurts then ask for help and don't be afraid to admit that it's not working for whatever reason. Is breastfeeding better than a bottle? Yes, I think so. It's totally free, on tap, suited to your baby and what Mother Nature intended for your breasts. I have learnt to shrug-off the embarrassed looks from male members of the family and I am discreet in public so breastfeeding became incredibly easy and a time for me to get to know Bradley. What can be nicer than your baby falling asleep after you have fed him? I admit to feeling a warm glow whenever I recall breastfeeding Bradley and I will be eternally grateful to Mandy for being a person who went the extra mile to make breastfeeding possible for me. Thank you Mandy, you deserved to win the Infacol Baby Bonding Award!