

Tongue tie, perseverance and success

By Mandy G.

As a pregnant mama, I didn't give a thought to the "how to of breastfeeding". I was sold on breast milk and had no plans for any other method of nourishing my baby. In hindsight, it would have been a good idea to study up on the technique of breastfeeding a little bit before Meara's arrival. I thought breastfeeding was pretty straight forward - apply baby to breast until babe is satisfied, done - simple. Turns out it wasn't that simple for us in the beginning.

Our sweet babe came via C-section. Due to some late pregnancy swelling and the surgery - I had flat nipples and this proved challenging for her to latch. The hospital's lactation consultant mentioned tongue tie, but I thought "why do you want to cut my baby". I didn't give it another thought.

Turns out, she WAS tongue tied. However, we didn't make this discovery until 8 weeks. In the meantime she was not gaining weight properly and we had to use many tools to provide her with breast milk. Our exceptional midwife, Patricia from Bella Vie Gentle Birth Center, helped us with recommendations for boosting my milk production and provided the tools to give Meara supplemental breast milk and weigh her daily to monitor her growth. She also referred us to Laura Dunn for lactation support services.

Laura came to our home and arrived with a cheery disposition. She was confident and helped us get off the shield and taught me about breastfeeding. She talked to me about pumping to protect my milk supply and taught me how to use the SNS. I pumped after every feeding, and we used a shield, SNS and bottle at times to make sure Meara was getting adequate milk. Meara's weight gain rebounded and we eliminated the supplemental feedings.

Laura also recommended cranio-sacral therapy (CST) and told me about a clinic in Portland. She accompanied us to the clinic and was very helpful by being an extra pair of hands. The CST was helpful relieving the tension in Meara's neck that was also negatively impacting her breastfeeding.

At eight weeks, unfortunately, I blistered badly and had to stop breastfeeding. I pumped and my husband bottle fed Meara for 10 days. Those 10 days were heart breaking for me. I realized how much I missed Meara and our special time together. My resolve to breast feed her became stronger. I contacted Laura immediately. She concluded that we had a possible tongue tie issue and referred us to Melissa Cole a lactation consultant in the Vancouver/Portland area. Laura, once again accompanied us to Portland which was extremely helpful.

Melissa has worked with a number of tongue tie cases and helped us meet this challenge by confirming the tongue tie and referring us to an ENT that would perform the clipping. Laura once again accompanied our family to the ENT's office in Portland for the procedure. After that

we met with Melissa for a follow up. Melissa taught us how to do oral exercises and re-train Meara's tongue for breastfeeding.

Laura and Melissa worked together in harmony with us to meet our ultimate goal of exclusive breastfeeding. When we re-introduced breastfeeding we began using the shield again. Both Laura and Melissa provided valuable emotional and practical support via email and phone contact.

I'm thrilled to say that at about 126 days we stopped using the shield. And on Meara's 140th day, we also became bottle and pump free. It is real FREEDOM for a work at home Mom to be able to SIMPLY and efficiently feed my sweet girl without shield, pump or bottle.

Meara has only had breast milk in her young life; I never had to give her formula. This journey was not easy. I shed many tears and we worked very hard together. Without the support of my husband and sister and the help from our midwife and lactation consultants we wouldn't have achieved this goal. I've found that often times the most difficult things in life are the most rewarding. This has been the most difficult thing I've ever done and I've done many difficult things. I can honestly say it's also been THE MOST REWARDING! I am so thankful to be able to provide my baby with the best nutrition and to share the sweetest moments bonding with her.

Thank you Brandon for late night burping, bottle feeding, diaper changes and hauling that pump everywhere we've gone for the last 4 months. Stacy, thank you for all your advice and for listening to me chronicle this journey.

Patricia, Laura and Melissa, thank you for working together so beautifully and helping us reach our goal!

Meara and I love breastfeeding!

Mandy