

Challenges, Pumping, Working, Mastitis, Abscess and More!

By Nicole M.

I planned on breastfeeding before I had Ciara. I felt like it was the most natural thing to do, and set myself up for any problems I'd have. I am quite stubborn when I put my mind to things, so I knew I wouldn't quit if any small problem happened. I knew it wasn't going to be a walk in the park either.

An hour after Ciara was born, she latched on and did so wonderfully. She took right to it. We went to sleep that night in the hospital, with her nursing all throughout the night. It was wonderful, even though I was exhausted. She stayed in my bed the entire time we were at the hospital (2 days). The second night was less than enjoyable. It began to hurt when she nursed, so much so that I was crying. I was by myself that night, and I got out of bed with her and we sat in the rocking chair. I could barely walk over to the chair and was so physically tired. But I kept on it, and so did she.

My milk came in on day 3. It was so crazy. I went to sleep on Day 2 with nothing, and I woke up the next morning, full of milk! Craziest thing ever. I took a shower, and I kept leaking everywhere. I didn't know what to do with myself or how to control it. But Ciara definitely loved it. She nursed non-stop it seemed for the next few weeks. My nipples finally healed up (after being cracked and bleeding) around 2-3 weeks and it was much nicer after that :)

At 9 weeks, I had to go back to work full-time, so I practiced pumping a week before I was due to go back in. I did alright with the pump, but was still nervous about how I was going to schedule everything. I hadn't discussed it all with my work, and I was very overwhelmed with it all. But I knew inside that I could do it. I did well with a pump, I pumped about 15-20 ounces a day, and had enough to freeze for her. I kept a stockpile in the freezer 'just in case'. I had over 200 oz for awhile.

At about a month after I was back at work, my supply seemed to dip. I became really frantic. I was only getting about 10 oz. I had a feeling it was my pump (a manual from my PIS, I didn't do as well with the electric). I had heard good things about the Avent Isis, so I went and got one of those, ate a bunch of oatmeal, and took Fenugreek, and I was back in business.

Ciara hated me being away. She cried non-stop the whole time I was gone. This made working even harder on me, but I had to do it so we could have insurance. It was so difficult to leave her crying everyday. At 8 months, I was finally able to switch to working only 2 days a week. This was so much easier on both of us. I still pumped at work, and my supply was going fine.

Ciara started solids at 8 months and 1 week. She didn't care for them and I didn't push them. Although I was being pushed to start solids, especially from her pediatrician, we held off and didn't force her. She didn't really start eating regularly until after a year.

Around 9-12 months, Ciara began biting constantly while nursing. She drew blood on many occasions. I found that if I blew in her face when I saw that she was going to do it, it really curbed the problem. She hardly bites at all anymore, really only if she wants let-down

immediately. She's demanding :P

At around 11 months, my supply dipped again, right before I had my period. I took Fenugreek again and increased my pumping. It evened out again and is back to normal. I nursed Ciara passed a year, and never thought about when she would wean. I just planned on her weaning herself.

I stopped pumping at about 20 months, since I was only putting out about 2 ounces per session, and she wasn't taking milk at home anymore. It was a waste of time, as I was just freezing everything. She went the entire time I pumped without being supplemented with formula. I am very proud to say that, since I worked so hard.

When she was 26 months, I became pregnant, and was worried about her, mostly. I did not want her to wean, because I was pregnant. I wanted her to choose for herself. She still seemed interested, and was nursing upwards of 10 or more times a day still.

I, so far, have not experienced much pain while nursing and pregnant. Though, it is very difficult for me emotionally. I can barely allow myself to nurse her, and have to force myself to let her. She's only nursing about once a day now, which I feel terrible about. I wish things were different somehow. I never anticipated coming across such issues nursing while pregnant; I just thought it would be painful. Yet, every time she nurses, it is like a stranger is nursing from me. It feels completely different from nursing her before. It does not make me happy while doing it, just makes me want to climb up the nearest wall. Still, she asks for it, and I could never force her to wean, so I persevere. She's two and a half now, so I figure, why stop her now? I am greatly looking forward to tandem nursing, and sincerely hope that she is still interested once the second baby arrives.

May 2007-

I developed a breast abscess when Oliver was 6 weeks old (Ciara kicked my boob, and the lump developed soon after). I wrote this up about having the abscess aspirated. I continued to nurse him until he was 3 years and 4 months old, without any problems with that breast:

My daughter kicked my very hard in the breast about 3 weeks ago. I noticed a hard, sore lump where she kicked me, but it got smaller and smaller, and stopped hurting. I forgot about it mostly, until last Saturday. It was sore again, so I began massaging it towards the nipple, hoping to unblock the plugged duct that was most likely there. It became bigger, and hurt more. I nursed my daughter for a little under 3 years, and had never experienced anything like that, and my son is just 6 weeks, so I was a little out of my area of knowledge. I kept hot compresses on it and took Ibuprofen.

The lump was even bigger on Sunday. About the size of a kiwi. I began to get body aches, and was worrying about mastitis. I nursed my son, and hoped it would go away. But Monday morning, it had gotten larger, my breast was beginning to get red, and I was feeling super ill. I went and saw a midwife, and she prescribed me an antibiotic, hoping it was just mastitis, and had not abscessed. If it was mastitis, the medication would start to take care of it in a day or so.

By Tuesday, I had a fever, and chills. I could barely get out of bed. The lump was about the size of an orange now. I was NOT feeling better. I saw the midwife again on Wednesday, and she referred me to a breast surgeon. I also was prescribed stronger antibiotics. My BP was very low for me (80/60). I was dizzy, and generally feeling like death warmed over. I was waking up at night soaking my sheets with sweat.

I got up late this morning, as I had just fallen back asleep at 6:30 and then got in a weird funky sleep. Brian came in to get me, and I felt all disoriented and was sweating a ton again. I got up and took my temperature and it was 95.8. I was like, "Is this thing broken?" I took it again, and it was 96. Super duper! I somehow got the kids and I together, in the car, got gas and made it to my parent's.

The whole ride there, I was just nauseous (probably from worrying), and just out of it. We got there, went through the wrong building, had to walk forever to get to the right one, and made it to the appointment 25 minutes late. The surgeon was really nice. She really calmed me down, just talking with me, about whatever.

The most painful part of the whole procedure was getting the shot of Novocaine. I kept my head facing the wall, since I get really dizzy and weird when I get shots/see needles/you know. My mom stayed in there with me with Oliver, who was a good baby the whole time.

After she got the needle in there, she took the syringe out, and popped a big, empty one in to pull up some of whatever was inside. I didn't know that, though, and she said, "WOW! Look at that!" I looked and the huge syringe was filled to the brim with pus! I was definitely abscessed! She took the syringe out to use it to get a culture on it, and left the needle in. I laid there and looked as pus dripped out every time my heart beat.

She came back and told me to look away. She cut the incision (about a 1/2 inch wide hole), and proceeded to squeeze the hell out of my boob for about 5 minutes, and pus just poured out like nuts. I was told it was green! After she didn't get much more, she placed an inch long tube in there to keep the area open so it can all drain out, and then put in the tubing that lead to the outside, and sewed me up.

I didn't look at the drain tube, until I got to my parent's. I didn't want to get sick or dizzy from looking at it. It's so weird. When I nurse, pus starts coming out during let-down, whether I'm nursing on that side or not. Nursing is not painful at all. I mean, compared to how I was feeling before, it's like nothing. I'm already feeling about 50% better. I'm still weak and tired, but the aches, fever and all that junk are gone. That was what was killing me. I'm so happy I'm getting passed this! Hooray! Next week, I have to go in to have the tube removed.

(Update: Nicole reports that she the abscess and breastfeeding issues resolved after medical care and support)