



# Breastfeeding Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1

*Responding to a baby's natural night waking with breastfeeding produces a happy and healthy mom and baby!*

## Breastfeeding Through The Night

~Breastfeeding allows mom a better night's rest~

By Leah Diffey, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

"How is your baby sleeping?"

"Does he sleep through the night yet?"

"Have you thought about giving him cereal so he will sleep through the night?"

"Aren't you going to train her to sleep so you can get your rest?"

Many new mothers hear questions like these in the first year of their baby's life. These questions imply that an infant should sleep through the night as soon as possible which may cause a mom to second guess her baby's frequent waking, but the research shows that it is normal and healthy for babies to wake throughout the night. This helps with development, bonding, and milk supply. The good news for breastfeeding moms is that they get better sleep than those who supplement. Responding to a baby's natural night waking with breastfeeding produces a happy and healthy mom and baby!

### **The First Few Months**

In the early weeks, baby needs to eat every 2-3 hours, on average, including the night time. If baby sleeps through the night, he may not get the proper nutrition needed. His blood sugar is not easily regulated yet so continuous nutrients are important. Breast milk is easily digestible and a baby's stomach is very small, so it is normal for them to eat small, frequent meals.

Some believe that giving a baby cereal will encourage them to sleep longer at night. This is not true. The baby's immature digestive system is not ready for any type of solid food until around six months. Offering foods before this time can cause issues with their tummies, both short-term and long-term. Breast milk is the perfect food for a young infant and meets all their nutritional needs.

### **Breastfeeding at Night- Not just the Milk**

Babies wake for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is because they are hungry or thirsty, but many times it is for other reasons:

- Baby wants more time with mom
- Teething
- Growth Spurt
- Wants comfort, either physically or emotionally
- Reverse Cycling- This is when a baby is separated from mom during the day and instead of drinking bottles with the caretaker, they increase feeding when with mom at night. This is a healthy option for baby to receive the proper amount of nursing in a given 24 period.

*Breastfeeding moms report better functioning, get more sleep, feel better during the day, and are less depressed.*

Breastfeeding is not only for nourishment, it is also for nurturing! Breastfeeding on demand, no matter the time of day, helps in the baby's overall development.

### **Benefits for mom and baby**

Breastfeeding increases sleep for the parents. Even though the baby might wake often, the sleep of the mom is less disturbed. Breast milk is always the perfect temperature and ready for the baby. As soon as the baby wakes, mom is able to satisfy his needs without further disturbance and stress of making a bottle. This allows baby to be calmed quickly and mom to be able to return to sleep quicker than if she had to deal with making a supplement. When moms supplement, they actually get less sleep.

Breastfeeding moms report better functioning, get more sleep, feel better during the day, and are less depressed. More sleep means the mom is at lower risk for Post-Partum Depression. Their overall health and energy are better which makes the days more enjoyable with their baby.

If a mom is tired during the day, she is encouraged to take a nap when the baby takes a nap. House chores can wait. Family and friends should support the mom by helping with meals, cleaning, and laundry.

Resources:

<http://kellymom.com/parenting/nighttime/sleep>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17700096>

Kendall-Tackett, K. A., Cong, Z., & Hale, T. W. (2011). The effect of feeding method on sleep duration, maternal well-being, and postpartum depression. *Clinical Lactation*, 2(2), 22-26.

**\*\*If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact Leah Diffey, BFPC at 573-470-0223. The Pike County Health Department is here to help you meet your breastfeeding goals!**

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