

Consulting young parents

Question:

I am researching teenage parents and breast feeding as Somerset experience a low rate of teen parents that do this or indeed continue past the very early weeks.

Could you offer me an insight into why this could be or what we could do to support teenage parents to start and continue this more freely?

Our overall aim is to improve the health of both mother and child – we are trying to raise the stats for all ages, teenage parents is my area though and I want to do something that works 'for them'.

Answer:

Thanks for contacting Prymface. I put the question 'Why do think young mums are less likely to breastfeed?' on my facebook page and it's caused quite a strong response! I think it's difficult to know how much age plays a part but some of the responses do highlight the lack of confidence, and not wanting others staring at them. I would also say it's really important that mums aren't made to feel bad if they don't want to or can't breastfeed.

Here are responses so far on facebook:

*They haven't got the patience or will to, IMO. I am still nursing my 10 month old and I am 17 tho :)x

*For me personally, i didnt breastfeed because i didnt want to but i know other young mums who didnt get support to breastfeed x

*Why would you not want to? It's the best x

*I think it's because a lot of them are afraid of what their peers will think of them. I know that a lot of the younger generation thinks that breastfeeding is really gross. I mean if getting pregnant when you were 16 wasn't enough for people to stare at I know that going to the bathroom to pump breast milk between classes will make people look. I was not one of those girls, I breastfed for 4 months.. wish I would have done it for a little longer. But when I talk to other young mothers in my community they think that it kinda gross, and they said their friends think that it is gross too. I don't know.. I tihnk that it is great bonding time and a special think only you and your baby can do together, I wish other young mom's would think the same! :) There is nothing "gross" about it!

*not really the case here in SA. In many communities bottlefeeding is frowned upon, too expensive, and there's also a stigma attached in some area cos if you're bottlefeeding you're assumed to be HIV positive.

*Probably the attitude of others. I didnt breastfeed to 6 months but i at least tried which my midwives weren't expecting, i wasnt happy with their little faith!

There's lots of 'pressure'/encouragement to breastfeed but the support doesnt match up to that standards so many fail miserably not knowing where they went wrong like i did or have too many unanswered questions to even feel happy to do it

*I planned on breastfeed, but once my son was born, I had post partum, I didnt want him "on" like that. Now that Im pregnant with number 2 I am going to try.

*My first at 18 had expressed milk for 2months but it dried up. Breastfed my 2nd at 19 for about a month but I was too shy to do it in public people stared even though I had a blanket covering myself. Its confidence but older mums have that issue aswell. I found I was given the information when I asked. Breastfeeding is easier. There is alot of confusion about what to do if you have an alcoholic drink. X

* you know what I do when people stare when I nurse my son in public without a cover? I just smile. If they have such a problem they can look away. Nobody has ever said anything to me about it :)

*I just didnt want to breastfeed so i didnt :)

*Personally I was never encouraged to breastfeed (my partner def didn't want me to either) and I know it sounds awful but, being pregnant at 16, I spent a lot of time just wanting to be invisible rather than people looking at me like I was freak! If I could go back in time though that would be the one thing I WOULD change....

*I don't think it has anything to do with being a young mum. I breast fed my daughter for 10 and half months. Average age mums are just as likely not to breastfeed. I think its to do with the society and our generation

*I had my first at 16 and was nervous about breastfeeding because of people staring and wispering. But I had a change of heart when she was born premature and taken to special care unit! I breastfed until she was 9 1/2 months!!

I think completely different now. And literally do it anywhere with my second, I even walk around feeding her!! :)

She's 1year in couple of weeks and still feeding showing no signs of wanting to stop!! :)

Stopping with my first was her choice! Lol

* I regret it now but some breastmilk is better than none imo. Will deffinatly do it for longer when I have a third. Saves all the fuss of sterilising. And Im alot more confident now. :))

*My first son was 13 wks prem and I was just going to bottle feed. They need all the help they can get x

*I wanted to breastfeed both my boys but couldn't due to milk drying up on day 5. Plus my eldest was born at 33 weeks so i couldn't hold him until he was a week old

*this status made me angry. people do or don't breastfeed because of personal choice. there is NOTHING worse than a healthcare provider pressuring you to breastfeed.

i'm currently pregnant baby number three, i breastfed none of them, and don't intend to breastfeed because... o.o! shock, horror, i don't want too :)

it's the twentyfirst century, people don't HAVE to anymore. it's got naff all to do with 'being gross' or uneducated/unsupported, if anything i recieve less supprt than other mums for bottlefeeding, and feel i have to justify myself for others for that choice.

why is that my choice? one, i like to work and i currently study-it'd be inconveiniant, at best. two, i'm selfish-i love my kids. but i also like to eat what i want, wear what i want, drink what i want (all within reason, obviously), three-i don't feel i have to, since there's a choice for a reason, four-it'd be difficult(in my opinion) to do with three kids. five-i'd like my boyfriend, children, nan, father to experiance what i do when feeding my child.

you can still have that bonding time with a bottle, infact, now other people can have that too. something i am SO excited for my older kids to experiance.

this question is so silly. if people WANT to breastfeed, that much, they'd give it a shot at least, wether 'socially right' in their age group or not. priorities change when you're a mother :)

like i said, i'm baby number three, and i STILL have to justify, EVERY SINGLE TIME I SEE MY MIDWIFE, who's the same person, i will not be breastfeeding.

i think that, in it'self, speaks alot.

*I expressed milk every four hours with my first so that she could be tube fed breast milk!

*i was 16 when [child] was born and breastfed for 6 weeks, despite the unhelpful midwives not giving me any support when i tried to tell them something was wrong, eventually i had to give up because my son was tonguetied severely and noone had even checked for it in the hospital. i hated myself so much for having to stop breastfeeding but it became a ridiculous routin where i was sat expressing his next feed whilst my mum sat and gave him a bottle of previously expressed milk. people who just dismiss it without trying to finding out the information make me really angry as i tried hard and was due to outside circumstance had to stop. but at least i know i gave my son the best start i could and i am proud of it. i plan to breastfeed all future children i have. there is no other choice for me.

*Formula isn't good for my baby. It has everything they need nutritionally just not the antibodies you get from breastmilk and that's the first six months if I'm thinking properly. And the status wasn't that bad. IMO most decisions to breastfeed are influenced by social opinions and whatever else has been said. I wouldn't have done with either if my first wasn't so prem as I thought I just didn't fancy it but things make you change your mind. X

* I did breastfeed for 3 weeks till I got mastitis and thought I had the flu so didn't have the energy! People like the girl who said Hannah rubs her up the wrong way annoy the hell out of me, I'm sick to death of... people, especially health professionals, shoving breast feeding down women's throats. There is nothing wrong with choosing a bottle, and women shouldn't be made to feel bad about it. We have inoculations for antibodies, it's not the dark ages where receiving them from mum was necessary. Btw I am pro breast feeding, but I'm also pro choice!!!!

Feedback:

This was really helpful. Many thanks and best wishes, I may contact you again in the future!