

## **BREASTFEEDING TRIPLETS**

Shortly after celebrating the news of the miracle of the 3 babies growing inside me, my mind shifted to the logistics of having triplets. How will I hold all three? How many diapers will we go through? How are we going to fit three cribs in one room or three car seats in our car? And how will I be able to feed all three infants? As a [WIC](#) dietitian I was very knowledgeable of breastfeeding benefits and wanted to do as much as I could to make it work with my babies. Initially, I set small goals and had the mindset that we would try it and see how it went but I never put huge pressure on myself to completely provide 100% breast milk for them. I didn't know if they would be very premature like the doctors warned, or if they'd be able to latch on right away, but when it was time to deliver them at nearly 36 weeks I thought we might have a shot at it.

On July 24, 2014 God blessed us with 3 perfectly healthy baby girls who had no medical conditions or shortcomings at birth. As soon as I was able to, in the recovery room from my cesarean, I began our first feedings, laying each tiny baby on my chest and to my surprise they all latched on without any difficulty! During our four day stay at the hospital we didn't run into many problems at all. I began expressing after the feedings to increase my milk supply. Another initial goal of mine was to avoid bottles in the first month at least. However, after telling as many nurses and staff members as I came into contact with before delivery not to give the babies bottles, they failed to listen to my request and provided each of them one ounce while they were transferring me up to our room. At that point I was angry and upset that they didn't listen to my request as a mother and feared that my babies wouldn't want to go back to the breast. Thankfully, as soon as they got to my room we started feeding again and continued to express extra for them.

When I returned home with the babies on day 5, I contacted a certified lactation specialist to help determine how the babies were doing with feedings. She brought in a baby scale for pre- and post-feeding weights and assessed latch and milk transfer and helped me to determine that the babies were receiving plenty of milk at the breast and that supplementation was not necessary at that time! Feedings were on demand, but having 3 babies meant when one wanted to eat, the others would be offered to feed at that time as well. The babies slept in a crib together in our room for a couple weeks, then transitioned to elevated single sleepers on each side of our bed with one still in the crib in our room. My husband (or family members who stayed the night for the first few weeks) changed diapers then brought the babies to me for feedings. We would start with the "squeaky wheel" as my husband and I put it, and offer the baby that was most hungry the breast first and double feed with baby #2 at the same time. After #1 and #2 were finished on one breast each, baby #3 would breastfeed on both sides for the most part, but would sometimes be satisfied with just the one side as well. This turned into their own sort of self-made schedule while I was home during maternity leave for the first 10 weeks.

After 8 weeks my employer allowed me to come back to work part time and ease into my regular full time schedule until my allowed 12 weeks were over. Working for the Women, Infant and Children program, I found my supervisors very supportive, they allowed me the time and space I needed to express for the babies while at work. I was fortunate enough to be surrounded by breastfeeding peer counselors from our program and my supervisor was also an [IBCLC](#), which allowed me to get any

questions I had answered sufficiently and relieved any fear I had when it came to expressing and producing enough milk. At work, I was never questioned about how much time it would take me or for how many months I would continue to take time out of work to do feed. In fact, our organization even made a policy to allow expressing moms to do it during work time and pay them for whatever time it took. Of course I respected the time allowed and had a routine to quickly set up and finish expressing, for example by having extra clean equipment so I didn't disrupt the work day too much. I was able to produce more than enough while expressing so was able to keep a nice storage of extra milk for them. At one point, I had an excess of at least 1,000oz of frozen milk for them so I began offering some to a friend with an adopted baby (who wasn't ever breastfed) every couple months.

At 6 months, I introduced solids to the babies and they took them wonderfully. They quickly began progressing and feeding themselves fruits, vegetables, whole grains and meats and continued to breastfeed without any milk supplementation. Now, here we are just after their first birthday and besides a few (unwanted) bottles of formula in the hospital, our tiny babies have grown into chunky, healthy toddlers with the help of the best nutrition I can provide for them - breast milk.

I cherish the moments I am breastfeeding my babies and adore the bond I've created with each one of them. I recently took a course to become a certified lactation consultant as well and am glad I can better serve my clients and friends I encounter who are breastfeeding their babies.