

Information Sheet on the “Breastfeeding Helps” Magnet

Amie Nowak and Nona Shorey created the “Breastfeeding Helps” Magnet and attached learning plan and overhead for our Douglas College Breastfeeding Counselor Certificate class (New Westminster, BC) in the spring of 2005.

The idea for the magnet arose out of a need identified by a prenatal instructor for easily accessible breastfeeding information for new parents. Amie and Nona decided on a fridge magnet, as this would not get lost as easily as a piece of paper.

The magnet is a quick reference guide that details ways of determining if baby is getting enough milk, such as number of wet and soiled diapers, and provides contact information for getting help. We came up with the double entendre “Breastfeeding Helps” as it stands for the fact that breastfeeding benefits infants and moms in a number of ways, and that the magnet provides help for new breastfeeding families. This project is intended to provide support for breastfeeding families in their earliest days by providing reassurance, and easy-to-find contact numbers if they do need help.

The design of the “Breastfeeding Helps” magnet was based on a 24-hour clock, with ten pink circles irregularly spaced around the outside, to represent a typical ‘on-demand’ feeding pattern. The seven blue circles represent wet diapers and the three light brown circles represent soiled diapers.

We chose the information for the “Breastfeeding Helps” magnet based on the fact that most studies list nipple pain and perceived insufficient milk supply as major factors in early weaning (1). A recent study in Alberta found that the most common reasons for early weaning were breast problems in the first week and insufficient milk production in weeks 1 to 6 (2). A British study found that 46% of women felt they didn’t have enough milk at some point while breastfeeding (3). When mothers struggling with perceived insufficient milk supply do decide to give up breastfeeding, another text noted “... This statement is generally well accepted by society as a reason for ceasing lactation. However it is rarely a true statement.” (4. p78. Hamilton, C.L.). The contact information includes Nona’s phone number, and the numbers for the local Public Health Unit and La Leche League. It also includes the 24- hour Nurseline and Internet references, because new parents can be worried at any hour of the day or night. The Breastfeeding Answer Book also reinforces these findings and also cites a couple of studies regarding mothers’ perceptions on insufficient milk supply (5. p150. Mohrbacher, N., Stock, J.).

The information that is reinforced by the “Breastfeeding Helps” magnet can be presented to expectant parents in the breastfeeding class of their prenatal series. The information can be presented through an interactive group quiz displayed on an overhead. See attached lesson plan, quiz and instructors guide (Appendix B, C, and D) for format. The idea of a quiz was to introduce the information to expectant parents in such a way that each person in the prenatal class could ‘win’ the magnet as a prize for answering one of the quiz questions. An interactive approach is used because learners retain more information and have increased satisfaction when they are active participants in their

learning process (6. p 415. Nichols, F.H., Humenick, S.S.). The questions that expectant parents may find more challenging are at the beginning of the quiz, which will allow the more knowledgeable parents to share their information with the class. The final question has many correct answers to allow for varying class sizes, and so that everyone may get a chance to answer correctly. It was hoped that by doing this, the magnet would become meaningful to the expectant mother and/or her partner, and that would increase the likelihood that it would be used as a resource.

This project was created using “Microsoft word”, so it is easily modified to suit the needs of other instructors, to include local, relevant information, such as the prenatal instructor’s name and phone number or any other appropriate resources. It can be translated into other languages to serve the non-English speaking population.

Computer-printable magnet sheets may be purchased from any local office supply store, as well as from Wal-Mart in the “Kids Arts and Crafts” section. The cost for each magnet worked out to approximately three dollars for each 8¹/₂ x 11 magnet sheet or about fifty cents for each individual magnet. You can also purchase 5x8 inch sheets and we have also made a template that would make four individual magnets that are somewhat larger.

It would also be possible to create the “Breastfeeding Helps” magnet in a more cost-effective manner by printing the information on card stock and attaching a magnet strip to the back, although we felt this to be less durable and less professional looking.

We intend for this magnet to be circulated to families and for the magnet to be modified as needed to make it relevant for different areas. Nona and Amie recognize that the magnet and perhaps the learning aides may need to be modified as needed for relevance to your area and we do not require any further permission to be obtained from us regarding the use or modification of this project as long as it is not used in any context in which the WHO code on the marketing of breastmilk substitutes is violated.

Although there are many other factors that affect a mother’s decision making around breastfeeding, we feel that the “Breastfeeding Helps” magnet identifies two potential stumbling blocks and provides avenues for support. It is hoped that by helping to provide these mothers with the proper support to foster a healthy, pain free, and worry free breastfeeding experience, they will choose to breastfeed longer.

References

Schwartz, K., D'Arcy, H.J., Gillespie, B., Bobo, J., Longeway, M. "Factors Associated with Weaning in the First Three Months." Journal of Family Practice. 2002 May;51(5):439-44

Yang, Q., Wen, S.W., Dubois, L., Chen, Y, Walker, M.C., Krewski, D. "Determinants of breastfeeding and weaning in Alberta, Canada." Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology of Canada. 2004 Nov;26(11):975-81

Graffy, J.P. "Mothers' Attitudes To and Experience of Breastfeeding: A Primary Care Study." British Journal of General Practice. 1992 Feb; 42(355):61-4

Hamilton, C.L. Overcoming Lactation Challenges: A guide for lactation caregivers. Etobicoke, ON: Prenatal and Infant Consulting Services, 1993.

Mohrbacher, N., Stock, J. La Leche League International The Breastfeeding Answer Book. 3rd ed. Schaumburg, IL: La Leche League International, 2002.

Nichols, F.H., Humenick, S.S. Childbirth Education: Practice, research, and theory. Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders, 1988.

Girvan, S. Baby's Best Chance: Parents' handbook of pregnancy and baby care 5th ed. Toronto, ON: Macmillan Canada, 1998.

Simkin, P., Whalley, J., Keppler, A. Pregnancy Childbirth and the Newborn. Minnetonka, MN: Meadowbrook Press, 2001.