

Feed for thought

Cherie's post tonight over at the [Raising Master Max Facebook page](#) got me thinking about breastfeeding again. Her post was about a cafe in South Yarra who had asked two mothers to leave because one of them was breastfeeding their four month old.

Before I got pregnant I always thought of breastfeeding as one of those things you just did as a mother. I knew some people didn't breast feed and I just assumed it was a choice. You either chose to or you didn't.

No one told me that it can bloody hurt, and that theres a whole industry and support network around breastfeeding alone! No one mentions you kind of have to figure out how to breastfeed in public yourself. The feeling you get that everyone knows you're a breastfeeding muppet who is either going to expose yourself or not feed your baby correctly *because* you are too anxious about exposing yourself!

I expected that as I was choosing to breastfeed then I would breastfeed and my baby would look adoringly into my eyes and we would have a fabulous bond because of it. So I joined as a member of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA), went to a breastfeeding class and assumed that would do the trick.

The reality of breastfeeding for me has been very painful bleeding cracked nipples, fast let down/oversupply issues, repeated visits to a lactation consultant, mastitis on top of dealing with a baby with reflux! That coupled with some nervousness about feeding in public has meant I haven't put myself in situations where I have had to feed in public much. Mother's group excepted because I do feel quite comfortable feeding there!

There is so much help and support out there for women to continue breastfeeding, and still Australian breastfeeding statistics show that we are falling short of the World Health Organisation and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Councils recommendations.

From the ABA website:

"The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for babies to 6 months of age, and thereafter for breastfeeding to continue alongside suitable complementary foods for up to 2 years and beyond.¹*

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends exclusive breastfeeding for around 6 months and then for breastfeeding to continue alongside complementary food until 12 months of age and beyond, for as long as the mother and child desire.²

.....Statistics from the 2010 Australian National Infant Feeding Survey³ results indicate that 96% of

mothers initiate breastfeeding. Thereafter, exclusive breastfeeding rates drop off. Less than half (39%) of babies are still being exclusively breastfed to 3 months (less than 4 months) and less than one quarter (15%) to 5 months (less than 6 months)." ([more info here](#))

After having breastfed for almost 12 weeks now - woo hoo! I can see why mothers give the game away. I think about it usually once a week! Its hard. Sometimes you feel like you need some time off and sure you can express a feed but that really only gives you a few hours before you need to express or feed again anyway. That's something I didn't know! It is just constant.

So why am I persevering? Well most of the time now feeds are pain free! Angus is gaining weight, having the right amount of wet and dirty nappies and I know that if I have any issues at all I can get help from the ABA 24-7 or I can book in to see a number of different lactation consultants and so I have no real reason to stop!

I like the fact that breastfeeding is good for my baby. I like that its so convenient! And part of me likes that its something that only I can provide for my baby.

Thats not to say that sometimes I think I'd just like my body back just for me - I do feel like a cow sometimes! But its getting to be a heck of a lot more like how I imagined breastfeeding would be.

I am just one mother experiencing these things, and I would say close to 100% of the women in my mothers group had feeding challenges. Some have stopped breastfeeding, some mix feed, some like me are lucky and doing better.

It is places like that cafe that shatter our confidence. Its not only the women that were asked not to feed there - its all the other women that hear about it and then wonder next time they go to feed in public, it is really okay that I'm doing this?

It IS okay, and the law actually says so. This section of the ABA website mentions [how to lodge a complaint.](#)

Of course the cafe might also protest if they had mothers sitting around with hungry babies. Surely that racket is worse than mothers doing one of the most natural things in the world!

- Jen

Edited to remove FB link as this was to an old cafe at 181 Domain Rd. The cafe in question is called Cafe Domain at 171 Domain Rd. The new cafe at 181 Domain Rd, is NOT involved and are lovely (patient) people! So if you are in the area head to Domain Brasserie not Cafe Domain!