

## **Module 1D– Fathers Want Healthy Smart Babies!**

**Teaching Point:** Present information that will help fathers to support the mother of their baby to breastfeed and clarify common myths.

**Game Plan:** Present the myth to the group, allow them to brainstorm whether it is true or false, then give correct answer and discuss.

### **Common Breastfeeding Myths: True or False?**

#### **Anyone who smokes cigarettes should not breastfeed.**

**False:** The medical recommendation (from doctors and scientific evidence) is that women should be encouraged to breastfeed, including those who smoke cigarettes. You or your partner may disagree, but please understand that the benefits of breastfeeding are so good that they outweigh the risk of the tiny amounts of nicotine or cotine in breastmilk of smokers. Babies of mothers who smoke are more likely to get respiratory (breathing) infections, and also have a higher risk of SIDS. Babies of mothers who breastfeed are protected against respiratory infections, and also have a lower risk of SIDS. So mothers who have not yet been able to quit smoking SHOULD DEFINITELY BREASTFEED because it helps the baby. It is always a good idea for your own health to quit smoking- see your doctor for help and ask your partner and family for positive support.

#### **Mothers have to eat healthy when they are breastfeeding or the milk will not be good for the baby.**

**False:** It is always good to eat healthy, but a mother's breast milk will be good no matter what she eats (chips, orange pop, junk food, fast food). She will feel better and have more energy if she eats well (protein, low-fat, lots of fruits and vegetables).

#### **A mother should get something to drink every time she breastfeeds.**

**True:** Really, a mother should drink whenever she is thirsty. Water is the best thing to drink.

#### **A mother should wash her breasts and nipples with soap and water, or wipe off with rubbing alcohol, after each breastfeeding so they are clean.**

**False:** The baby's mouth on the nipple and areola does not make the nipple or breast dirty. The mother doesn't need soap on her breasts because it will dry out the skin. Rubbing alcohol should not get anywhere near her breasts! The mother should express a little breast milk after each feeding onto the nipple area and let it air dry- breast milk has immune and healing ingredients that will help heal and cleanse her skin. A regular shower once a day with just water on the breast is fine.

#### **It is OK to have up to 2-3 cups of coffee or caffeinated drinks each day and breastfeed.**

**True.** Check it out on [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)! “Drinking a moderate amount (up to 2 to 3 cups a day) of coffee or other caffeinated beverages does not affect a breastfeeding baby.” If a mother drinks a cup of coffee and breastfeeds shortly after you might notice the baby is not ready to go to sleep- so encourage her to have her caffeine earlier in the day.

**If a mother's nipples are hurting she should get help right away because breastfeeding should be comfortable.**

**True:** All pain needs to be evaluated or checked out with a health caregiver- either a doctor or nurse or lactation consultant. The mother of your baby probably needs help with latch and position, and this is easy to fix with good help.

**If a mother breastfeeds she can lose her pregnancy weight quickly.**

**True:** We know a mother will burn up an extra 400-500 calories every day when she breastfeeds, so she really can lose weight quickly! Plus with the uterus shrinking due to the breast milk let down hormone oxytocin many women feel their tummy gets flat soon.

**Breastfeeding makes breasts sag and look less perky, and it might mess up nipples.**

**False:** The hormones of pregnancy make breasts get larger, and then the breasts go down (shrink) after the pregnancy hormones are done. That is why women's breasts are different after they have a baby. If a woman breastfeeds her breasts will stay larger while breastfeeding (the milk hormones) and then they will go down after the baby weans. So if a woman wants full time perky breasts, the thing is say "no" to pregnancy, not to breastfeeding! When the baby is breastfeeding the nipple should be way in the back of the baby's mouth (good latch) so the woman's nipples feel good. Encourage the mother of your baby to get help within 24 hours if there is nipple pain, but for her own comfort, not because the nipple will get messed up.

**It's OK for women to use all usual skin lotions and perfumes when breastfeeding.**

**True:** Babies loves how their mother smells and how their father smells! What a mother does for yourself everyday does not need to change. Mothers should just not put lotion or perfume right on the breast or nipple- only lanolin or expressed breast milk can go there- but everywhere else is fine.

**It's nasty for a woman to have the baby sucking on her breasts.**

**False:** That is not true. The baby drinking milk from breasts is completely natural. That is what breasts are for. The milk "let down" hormone, oxytocin, gives mothers a deeply calm, relaxed feeling AND it helps her to want to hold and bond to her baby – none of that is nasty at all. A woman's breasts might release milk during sex because of the same hormone (oxytocin), and she might have a mild sexual feeling while breastfeeding, which it is OK to enjoy.

**A mother might have soreness or pain in the first two weeks of breastfeeding.**

**True.** A woman's nipples and breasts are not used to the baby feeding. But fathers can help her be in control of this: your baby's mother should only accept deep comfortable latch- don't let the baby suck on the nipple only. Encourage her to use different positions to feed and start on the other side each time. Encourage her to get help if she needs to. Your baby's mother will feel tugging and pulling, but pain IS NOT part of breastfeeding.