

BREASTFEEDING

MATTERS

November / December 2025

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Letter of thanks to LLL

I'm not just "the milk"

1000 days of breastfeeding

Breastfeeding against the odds



La Leche League GB

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Breastfeeding Matters

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Contributions and Feedback

We would love to receive your contributions and hear your ideas. If you have a story, toddler talk, poem, piece of art, feedback, or anything else you'd like to share with us, please use our form:

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Editors' Letter

Welcome to Breastfeeding Matters!

Our last edition focused on milk sharing — and that extraordinary generosity has overflowed into this one. Many thanks to Arantxa, Rebecca, and Lucy for sharing their stories with us. Alongside tales of overcoming early challenges, Sophie, Christine, Storm, Riina, and Emma look back on breastfeeding with gratitude, sadness, and a sweet nostalgia for this precious yet fleeting stage in a child's life.

There's plenty of energy, too: from Charlotte cooking in Shetland to Gerri exploring how to be a breastfeeding supporter as her own family life evolves. Our podcast (and baby Hector) celebrate birthdays, and we welcome new Leaders. Not forgetting the toddlers and preschoolers who've shared their thoughts on breastfeeding!

Nothing stands still — and LLL continues to find new ways to support each generation of mothers and babies. We're so glad you're part of it.

With LLLove,

Jayne and Bronwyn



Jayne Joyce (left)

Jayne Joyce is a Leader in Oxfordshire. Her family includes three teen/young adult children and a cat called Honey

Bronwyn Davies (right)

Bronwyn Davies is a Leader in Rochester, Kent, and mum to two boys



Cover

Arantxa Gutiérrez
Raymondova

Read Arantxa's story
on page 12



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Breastfeeding Against the Odds

By Rebecca Mitchell, Leeds

It was the first day of my maternity leave. I was 36 weeks pregnant, attending a routine antenatal appointment with my partner Tom. The midwife began to listen to our baby's heartbeat – excitedly she encouraged Tom to start recording it. As he was scrambling to get his phone out, the heartbeat stopped. The midwife's colour left her face, and before I knew it she was calling for an ambulance. Lily was born by caesarean within the hour, blue and lifeless. She had to be resuscitated, and rushed to hospital in Bradford where she had cooling treatment to try and minimise any damage to her brain. I didn't get to meet her until she was four days old.

I am very proud that she never had any milk other than mine.

Lily was in the NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] for about two weeks. At first she was fed by NG tube [a nasogastric feeding tube passed through the nose directly into the stomach]. It took about ten days before she was able to feed at the breast. My flat nipples made it harder for her to latch, so one midwife suggested using nipple shields, which immediately worked. We used these until Lily was about two months old.

I expressed for Lily from the start and I am very proud that she never had any milk other than mine. Though my mum only breastfed me and my brother for a relatively short time, she'd always said what a wonderful experience it was, so I knew it was something I was certain I

Editors' note

Many breastfeeding mothers choose to bedshare with their baby – sleeping close to their mother is what babies expect. It's important to follow safe sleep guidelines – see laleche.org.uk/safe-sleep-the-breastfed-baby/ and check out our LLLGB Breastfeeding Matters podcast episodes with sleep expert Professor Helen Ball.



was going to do. I also had a friend, Christine, who was a La Leche League Leader – she was invaluable in giving me information and emotional support throughout our time in hospital.

We were very fortunate that Lily didn't have long-term brain damage. Nonetheless, I found the first six months difficult. I needed to gain confidence to go against the norm. Lily and I were making up for lost time. We began bedsharing very early on, eventually leading to a massive family bed (a superking joined to a single), which we all sleep in to this day!

Bedsharing was actively discouraged by health professionals, which created such fear and shame for me, which I had to work through. I knew there were safe ways to cosleep, and I knew the benefits in terms of attachment and sleep quality for both of us. It took a good couple of years until I felt truly confident in my own decisions. It helped that Lily was a happy, relaxed baby and we felt like a team. I continued to be supported by Christine, a motherly figure who helped me tune into my own intuition.

Lily breastfed for three and a half years, only stopping when my son Lucca was born. She's six now and still occasionally asks to breastfeed! In

some ways I'd have liked to continue, but I got to a point where I just didn't want to anymore. I was also concerned that nursing two children would exacerbate the oversupply I'd had the first time around.

My second pregnancy was fraught with anxiety, following Lily's birth trauma and three subsequent miscarriages. This wasn't helped by some scans picking up slightly unusual measurements, but the most common genetic conditions (such as Down's and Edwards) were ruled out, and no one seemed worried. Lucca was born by planned caesarean. I was hoping for a reparative experience, but it was not to be. Lucca didn't cry after birth and was in NICU for three days because of low oxygen levels.

This time we were able to establish breastfeeding much more quickly, but by day four I knew something wasn't right with my baby. Newborns are always a bit floppy, but Lucca was exceptionally floppy, and never made eye contact. His reflux was horrendous; he threw up large volumes of milk many, many times a day. With the reflux, and my oversupply, breastfeeding was a messy business – we were constantly covered in milk and vomit! We had regular contact with our GP, but I didn't want to start reflux medication because I worried it might constipate Lucca.

My oversupply turned out to be useful, in some ways.

My oversupply turned out to be useful, in some ways. An NHS feeding specialist we saw early on said I had enough milk to feed the whole street! With a hospital pump I could easily express 400ml in ten minutes. She'd never seen anything like it in 20 years.

It meant that Lucca didn't have to work very hard to get plenty of milk, and I could easily

Editors' note

An average baby of 1–6 months in age drinks around 750ml of milk in 24 hours, so 400ml in one session is an enormous amount! You can read more about oversupply at laleche.org.uk/too-much-milk-and-oversupply/



replace the milk he threw up. Luckily, he could breastfeed well enough that I didn't have to express, which might have made my oversupply even worse. On the other hand, because Lucca was gaining weight so brilliantly, it was difficult to get anyone to listen to my worries about how he was developing. One GP said, "Maybe breastfeeding just isn't for everyone?," which was not helpful.

My concerns about Lucca were increasing as he got older, though I still desperately hoped that he would "pass" as a normal, healthy baby. At six months, he still couldn't sit up in a high chair – he'd just fall over to the side. He could



smile, but didn't smile at faces like most babies do. The GP finally assessed him thoroughly, and diagnosed him with 'global developmental delay'. My anxiety and devastation were building. The same kind GP helped expedite our referral to a paediatrician (we waited six weeks for an appointment, which typically would have been six months).

Lucca was seven months old when we met our lovely paediatrician for the first time. I just cried when I saw her. It was such a relief – after mentioning my concerns to people for many months, we were finally being taken seriously. But it was also really painful. "He doesn't look much like you or Tom, does he?", she said. She noted several facial features, such as the positioning of his ears, which suggested that Lucca might have a genetic condition. She was very kind, but it felt brutal. Blood tests were taken and six weeks later we got a call asking us to come for an urgent appointment the following day. That was an appointment I'll never forget.

Breastfeeding has been incredibly important for us.

At eight months, Lucca was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome (AS). After all the research I'd done, I had become familiar with quite a few genetic conditions and knew of AS. The night before our appointment, I joked to Tom saying 'wouldn't it be convenient if Lucca had



Angelman Syndrome' (our nickname for Lucca had become 'angel man' due to his sweet, tender nature). Though Angelman Syndrome is not life-limiting (something I'd feared), it was certainly not what we'd wanted or expected. We began a process of grieving, which continues.

My way of dealing with difficult things is to gather as much information as I can. The moment we knew the diagnosis, I requested to join the Angelman Syndrome UK Facebook group. Tom began watching YouTube videos of people with Angelman Syndrome. It took me a while before I could do that. Tom incidentally has epilepsy himself (unrelated to Lucca's condition). He used to work for the disability charity Scope, and now works for Epilepsy UK. There is a lot to deal with, as the parents of a child with disabilities: constant advocacy, filling in forms, dealing with professionals, and finding our way through so many unknowns. But between the two of us, I think we are as well equipped as you possibly could be.

Breastfeeding has been incredibly important for us. In those early months, I felt I'd done something wrong, because I wasn't connecting



Editors' note

Angelman Syndrome affects 1 in 15-20,000 births. Children with AS (known as "Angels") have physical and intellectual disabilities and need lifelong care. They have difficulties with communication, coordination, and balance. Seizures (epilepsy), sleep issues, and hyperactivity are common. Most children with AS never breastfeed.

with Lucca as I had with Lily. Was I struggling to adjust to caring for two children? Had it not been for breastfeeding, I could easily have developed postnatal depression. Breastfeeding gave us lots of opportunities for eye contact and closeness, even though in general Lucca didn't particularly like being held. It has been such an important part of our bond.

Amazingly, despite all his other difficulties, and with a little help (like me shaping the breast), Lucca has always breastfed brilliantly. Even compared with some other "Angels" his age, Lucca struggles with pretty much every other motor skill: sitting, holding, standing. His ataxia means that his movements are jerky, and he's often restless. But when he breastfeeds he is coordinated, controlled, and skilled. He doesn't choke – and he sits still!

He smiles and laughs – it's clear to see how much he loves breastfeeding.

As he's got older, it's become even clearer how valuable breastfeeding is for him. It helps emotionally regulate Lucca through our many medical appointments! I also believe that breastfeeding and bedsharing have helped with Lucca's sleep, which in turn might be keeping his seizures at bay. In the last year he's become much more interactive. He smiles and laughs – it's clear to see how much he loves breastfeeding. In what can become quite a 'medicalised' way of life, breastfeeding provides us with a level of normality and warmth.

He was exclusively breastfed until he was eleven months old. During breastfeeding he didn't have the dysphagia (swallowing difficulties) common among Angels, but his coordination issues and lack of interest in solids meant he needed to have an NG [nasogastric feeding tube] fitted again at 11 months. This was a hard decision to make, but I knew he was at the age where he needed more nutrients than just my breastmilk could give.

At 18 months, this was replaced with a PEG tube [PEG: *Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy, surgery that enables a feeding tube to be passed into the stomach through the abdominal wall*]. He can now manage some



solids, but struggles to drink anything other than breastmilk. Due to his poor muscle tone, reflux and constipation will be lifelong battles for him.

Breastfeeding offers us the most perfect way to reconnect after a long day apart

Lucca turns three in the new year, and recently began a special school. Breastfeeding offers us the most perfect way to reconnect after a long day apart. When and how our breastfeeding journey will come to an end I just don't know. With Lily, I could talk to her and explain why. However, Lucca is non-verbal and will developmentally remain a toddler forever. I'm in no rush to stop and open-minded about continuing for a while, but I'm also anxious about how weaning will go when the time comes. It's been a journey just as precious as he is.

I would give anything for Lucca not to have AS, but it's also what makes him who he is. I am so proud of him, but especially proud of our breastfeeding relationship and how far we've come together.

1000 days of breastfeeding

By Riina Thomalainen, LLL Cambridge



1000 days of breastfeeding. A thousand days of being your mother. How do you measure such a thing?

I've breastfed on planes, trains, and on the back seat in the supermarket parking lot. I've breastfed on a ferry and on a packed rush-hour bus stuck in traffic. On the move, and solidly, tiredly, firmly on the sofa and not going anywhere.

I've breastfed in the park, and in the pub, and in the fitting rooms of a shop because you wouldn't stop crying, and then in the park again. In quiet nature, on a riverbank, and in cities surrounded by people. In the church while singing carols, and on a sunny beach, and probably also inside a supermarket and definitely in a cafe standing in a queue to order my own latte.

Sitting on the floor and sitting on a chair and perched on the edge of a table and standing up, in a sling, under a winter coat, and naked fresh out of the shower, while eating my own dinner

with one hand and while having conversations and while scrolling my phone, and while having a quiet moment in our bubble, focusing on nothing but this.

I've breastfed through jabs, and hospital appointments, and fevers and tummy bugs, and scraped knees and one snipped tongue tie, and all the big emotions and new environments and disappointment because we can't have chocolate for breakfast.

I've breastfed at parties and in fancy dress, and fancily dressed in fancy concerts to keep things calm and buy me a little more time.

Through specific, practical challenges with latch and positions and managing milk flow, and through vague and impossible-to-define challenges of is something wrong or is this just how babies are, and is this really how ceaselessly my baby needs me, and am I doing anything the right way anyway.

My baby who's not quite so baby anymore, has grown from this little potato into an amazing, unique, wildly communicative little human who is full of character and just as much mystery as ever, even though we can read each other now. Whose first and by far most used sign



Editors' note

For sling safety information, see babyslingsafety.co.uk/

If you're breastfeeding beyond babyhood and looking for company, we'd love to meet you! LLL groups welcome nurslings of all ages.

was "milk" those two-and-some long years (that passed in a blink) ago, and who now has many pet names and shorthand words for the breasts that give him milk, as well as the specifics of having that milk. A favourite side. Routines and rituals that have built up over time. Sleepy milk. Cuddle milk. Standing milk. Hammock milk. Potty milk (yes that's a thing). Who now breastfeeds his own cuddly toys in turn.

I've also grown into something new and different, a person who didn't exist before and couldn't exist if it wasn't for this mundanely/mysterious, everyday routine magic that's connecting me not only to my baby and building foundations for all that is to come, but also to all the generations

and places and people that were, who have all done what we do, and who share this experience that is just the same and entirely different for each one of us.

I've breastfed to sleep a thousand times wondering if it will ever end, and terrified of it ending because I'm not ready for that yet. Through self doubt over this one thing that I am absolutely, utterly certain about.



Can We Stay Like This Forever?

By Sophie O'Carroll

Sophie O'Carroll is a music teacher, singer, and writer from Kildare, Ireland. She is married to Seán and they welcomed their little boy Tiernan in December 2023. This poem was written during a late-night nursing session in the depths of winter.

Sophie is a member of LLL Portlaoise Nursing Beyond Infancy group, Ireland.

Can we stay like this forever?
Peaceful, still,
You, nestled in my chest,
Guarded from the world,
Content with this moment,
As time passes,
But we stay right here.



I'm not just "the milk"

By Arantxa Gutiérrez Raymondova, LLL Oxfordshire



I never thought I'd end up donating breastmilk. I don't have any personal connection to premature babies or neonatal units. Honestly, in the early days of feeding I was mostly focused on trying to make breastfeeding work at all, because I was really sore. But once things settled and feeding was going well, my midwife mentioned milk donation and gave me a leaflet. It felt like something small but meaningful I could do to help other babies and families who really need it.

I don't express milk for my own baby because he feeds directly from me, so the milk I express and donate isn't for us – it's this little extra



effort I've taken on for others. I suppose it comes from a sense of duty and solidarity.

One moment that really stayed with me was when I mentioned the donation to a friend. Her baby was born in France at 26 weeks, and he's now a healthy four year old. When I told her I'd been donating, even though it was in a different country and a different time, she thanked me twice. That really struck me – even if I'll never meet the babies who receive my milk, someone like my friend hasn't forgotten what it meant for them in that difficult moment.

What's been surprising, though, is how people around me have reacted to the fact that I donate. A close family member is incredibly proud. When I sent her a photo of the frozen bottles of milk ready for collection, she forwarded the picture to other people, almost like she was showing off. But at the same time, if I get the pump out in her presence, there's suddenly this tension... as if I might leave my baby hungry. It's like the milk I give to others is seen as generous, but the act of expressing it is somehow met with suspicion. It's confusing, to be honest. People want to see the generosity, but not the practical side of how you actually do the expression.

My husband is incredibly supportive, but then there's another close male relative who likes to joke. When the latter is holding the baby and I go to the fridge to freeze the bottles of expressed milk, he'll say something like, "Hey buddy! That's your milk! You're being robbed!".

Editors' note

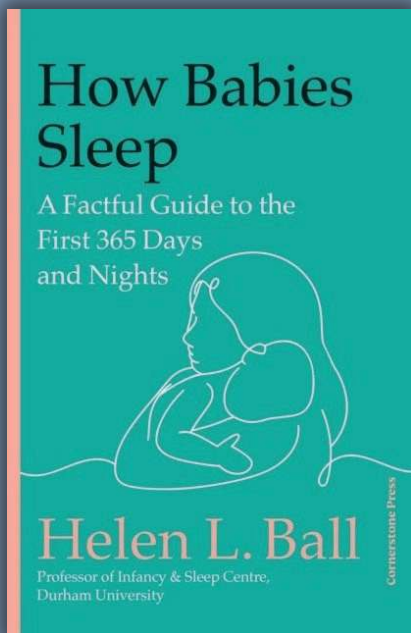
If your baby is thriving on your milk, you may be able to make extra to share by expressing regularly, if you'd like to! You can read about how milk production works at laleche.org.uk/how-milk-production-works

If you're interested in becoming a milk donor, you can find out more at ukamb.org/donate-milk/. It's an amazing gift to the most vulnerable babies.

He'll laugh, but then a moment later he'll look down at the baby and say something like "You're great, you are showing solidarity." And I know it comes from a good place. But even then, I end up feeling a bit uncomfortable, like I've become a kind of milk machine.

It got to the point where I'd only express in my bedroom, with the door closed, just to avoid the comments. I know they are lighthearted, but there's this strange shift when you're breastfeeding. It's like people start to see your body in terms of function. I've even had my family tell the baby when I enter the room, "Ah, look, your milk has arrived!". And I know what they mean, but I'm not just "the milk". I feel the milk is mine and I choose to feed him with it. Surely that distinction should matter.

Overall, I'm glad I'm donating. Even with the slightly strange dynamics, I have no doubts that I'd do it again. I just wish people would be more confident about my capacity to feed my baby and donate at the same time, and realise that jokes are not always welcome.



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Meet a Leader

By Gerri Anup-Willcocks, LLL Cotswolds

Tell us about you, your family, and which LLL group you belong to.

My name is Gerri, and I am mama to six-year-old Nila and 11-month-old Kailan. I lead LLL Cotswolds with the lovely Claire Llanwarne and I lead LLL Suffolk (where I used to live) virtually. I've been a part of LLLGB since 2018, when I had my first baby. Before having children, I worked overseas in humanitarian emergency response. After returning to the UK, much of my work was office-based, and I really missed the human connection. I craved working in the community on a cause I was passionate about. When I had Nila, we struggled with breastfeeding, and though I never actually made it to a breastfeeding support meeting, it ignited my passion to improve breastfeeding support in the UK.

What does breastfeeding mean to you, your child, and the rest of your family?

Improving the state of breastfeeding is one of the most important endeavours I've ever been a part of. Having helped run therapeutic feeding centres in camps for displaced people in South Sudan and Ethiopia, I've seen many severely malnourished babies – babies that had become dependent on formula in circumstances where clean water wasn't guaranteed. It put them in such a vulnerable position.

The most valuable thing is just being a support.

I have supported families with breastfeeding challenges in the UK for six years now, and it's been really rewarding being able to share part of their breastfeeding journey, helping them work out what is causing difficulties, coaching mothers who might be having a bit of a wobble, or who feel bogged down by the challenges they are facing, and working to help



families develop a clear plan to achieve their breastfeeding goals. I love the 'detective work' part of breastfeeding support – but actually, a lot of the time the most valuable thing is just being a support, a place to go to get reliable information, and helping mothers find others who can share similar experiences.

How did you hear about LLL?

I've always loved feeling useful. I love giving a cuddle (physical or metaphorical!). I love feeling like I've been able to have a positive impact in the world. After I started to recover from the difficulty of our early days of breastfeeding, I looked for ways to help prevent other parents going through what I did. I felt shocked and frustrated that it had been so hard to get the support I needed. Of the main organisations working in breastfeeding support locally, it was LLL that I felt aligned most closely with the values I'd developed as a new parent. I reached out to my local leader, Janine. She had her own hands very full with her family and was looking to step down after single-handedly running the group for a while. I was full of fire to get going, so offered to take over the group as soon as I was accredited!

How did you find the Leader accreditation process?

It was an unusual journey for me; Janine finished as I started my accreditation process, so I joined a busy London group virtually,

supported by a group of Leaders. It was great – lots of WhatsApp conversations and video-calls but it meant I never actually attended another in-person group, and to this day I still haven't, other than those I have led or helped my co-Leader run! I was so keen to get operational as a Leader, ploughing through the written parts of the application process, and whizzing through loads of the books in our library that I had inherited from Janine. However, it was the counselling skills I really had to practise extensively, making sure I actually met the mum where she was, helping her find her own answers, rather than rushing ahead with a 'plan of action'. I found it tough to slow down and pace myself, as I was so keen to get going!



I love feeling like I've been able to have a positive impact in the world.

What do you do as a Leader and how does it fit into your life?

I started out doing lots of Helpforms (email helping) and helpline calls, as well as running a busy group in a children's centre in Suffolk, and attending all sorts of local infant feeding groups, like the Maternity Voices Partnership. I've moved to Gloucestershire now and had another baby, as well as supported another Applicant to become a Leader. I'm trying to be kinder to myself and take things a bit easier!

I am leading the Suffolk meetings monthly online, and doing an in-person meeting for LLL

Cotswolds at my house once a month, whilst my new co-Leader leads another meeting in Cheltenham. She does more one-to-one helping now, while I support other Leaders as part of LLLGB's Professional Liaison team. It all feels a lot more sustainable, and thankfully I am supported by my employer to keep learning about infant feeding as part of my workplace learning and development plan, which is lovely.

Taking the time to become and practise as a Leader, and running both groups, has definitely put strain on our family at times. But my husband is so proud, and is a massive fountain of breastfeeding knowledge himself! We've spent many a long evening discussing with friends how to improve support for breastfeeding in the UK. Having seen the impact breastfeeding has had on our children's lives and development, he feels equally passionate about breastfeeding and does all he can to support me to support each family I work with.



What do you enjoy most about being a Leader?

That moment when you hear from a mum that things are starting to turn around and they see the light at the end of their particular tunnel! Sometimes it's feeds no longer being painful, sometimes it's a baby no longer struggling with reflux, sometimes it's a baby finally returning to the breast after a nursing strike. No matter what it is, it often still brings tears of relief to my eyes!

What would you say to someone thinking about becoming a Leader?

This could be one of the most fulfilling things you'll ever do! There's something magical about the connection that forms when we partner with a parent who is in such a vulnerable place, as they face challenges to doing something that for most is such a deep, urgent instinct. It is truly an honour.

This could be one of the most fulfilling things you'll ever do!

What is your best tip for a new mother?

For every breastfeeding problem, there's almost always a breastfeeding solution, or a workaround, though we've lost a lot of that knowledge in our society and it can take some hunting to find the information you need. If it's not an easy journey, commitment and support are critical. What matters the most is your connection to baby – not the number of ounces of milk they received.

What would your perfect day look like?

A lie-in, followed by a cup of tea, biccies, and snuggles in bed with my family. Get up, have a shower on my own (rare!), go out for brunch by the river with the dog at a café. Go horse riding together on the moors, then come back and laze around in the sunshine on the beach, going for a long swim in the early evening. Finish up by having dinner at home, having an aromatherapy bath (alone! Imagine!) and snuggle on the sofa reading and watching a movie with my hubby before a lovely early bedtime at 9pm. Bliss!

Passionate about supporting breastfeeding? Maybe you could be an LLL Leader!

Volunteering with LLL gives you the chance to make a real difference while learning new skills, building friendships, and serving your community. There's no single way to be a Leader – the role can flex and evolve to suit your time, energy, and life stage.

Check out the information at laleche.org.uk/thinking-about-lll-leadership/ and talk to your local Leader, or contact applicationenquiries@laleche.org.uk. You can find videos about the accreditation (training) process at llli.org/get-involved/steps-to-accreditation/



Credit: Mouse About Town

A letter of thanks to La Leche League

By Emma Thompson, LLL Cambridge



I want to say a huge thank you! Thank you for the support you have given me, that has facilitated my breastfeeding journey. I have recently felt sad that my breastfeeding has come to an end before I was ready, as I have started a course of chemotherapy, but it's also made me reflect and feel proud of the four years in total that I have mothered through breastfeeding.

I have been part of the LLL community in Cambridge via Zoom meetings in the midst of Covid lockdown, attended in-person meetings, and called on 1:1 support when needed. As with a lot of new mothers, I had extensively researched pregnancy and labour, but not very much about how to feed my baby!

I have three children. My first baby, Toby, had a tongue tie, jaundice, and slow weight gain, so we had a difficult start. 'Triple feeding' involved lots of pumping, bottles, nipple shields, finger feeding, supplemental nursing systems... you name it, we tried it. By about eight-weeks we were almost fully breastfeeding, and kept going for 19 months. With my second baby, Robin, I felt like quite an expert. Aside from some reflux early on, things felt mostly easy. I fed him for 22 months.

My third baby, Billy, was born in October 2024. Things started well, but I discovered a fast-growing lump in my thigh that was diagnosed as a cancerous Pleomorphic Liposarcoma. Due to the size of the lump, and referred symptoms down my leg, I needed a cocktail of pain medications and felt empowered to ensure

these could be tailored to support ongoing breastfeeding.

In March, after five weeks of radiotherapy, I had surgery at a specialist sarcoma centre in Birmingham to remove the tumour, and was in hospital for nine nights. My husband rented an apartment close by with Billy and we started some combination feeding, as well as pumping in the hospital when he wasn't with me. Unfortunately, starting chemotherapy in June meant I have now stopped breastfeeding, but I was pleased to have made it to almost eight months with Billy.

This photo is of my final breastfeed with Billy before going for my first chemo dose. It felt very difficult and emotional at the time, but I'm glad I have this memory to treasure. With Toby and Robin, I don't remember a 'final feed' as it naturally tailed off, but I do remember breastfeeding Toby towards the end and thinking about all the milk I had given him – at which point he happened to look up and smile at me, then got up and kissed my face, which is also a special moment I'll remember. I felt like he was saying "Thanks, Mum".

The help I've had along the way from LLL Leaders, as well as peer support from other mums at the groups, has given me so much. As well as practical feeding skills, I've learnt to trust my own instincts as a mother and do what's right for me. I have seen many examples of how strong and nurturing mothers are. Thank you to all of you involved with LLL, from the bottom of my heart.



My (our!) milk sharing story

By Lucy Ling, LLL Cambridge



My oldest daughter Ivy was three weeks old when we finally, in desperation, saw an IBCLC and tongue-tie practitioner, who confirmed our suspicions that she did indeed have a tongue tie. This answered a lot of questions about why she wasn't gaining weight despite constantly being on the breast, and never happy unless she was on the breast! And why I was in excruciating pain every time she latched.

If only I'd found LLL at this point, instead of two months later!

The IBCLC recommended that the tongue-tie division be delayed by a week while we got more milk into Ivy. By now, my supply had been impacted, as I'd not received good-enough

information about how much I should have been expressing to support my supply while she clearly wasn't getting enough milk. (If only I'd found LLL at this point, instead of two months later!) We explained how nervous we were to use formula, given my partner's history of multiple allergies. She listened, gave us a whole host of tips for improving my supply, and wrote out a feeding plan.

We came away from that appointment with a long to-do list: hiring a hospital-grade pump, looking into galactagogues [medications that might improve milk production], and finally, contacting Hearts Milk Bank (HMB), an organisation that just happened to be an hour down the road from us. My partner phoned them that afternoon and got the fantastic news that due to a glut of milk available for babies in the community (which isn't always the case), they would be able to donate three litres of milk to us. So that afternoon, Jon set off to pick up a coolbox full of frozen milk from their headquarters in Harpenden, a place I'd previously only associated with work nights out!

The little bottles of donor milk were an absolute lifeline to us

At one point during the call Jon passed the phone to me and I spoke to Dr Weaver, one of the founders of HMB. She told me what a wonderful job I was doing and that from now on I was to focus on nothing but feeding and being fed. It was the first time anyone had congratulated me on what I was trying to do – exclusively breastfeed – and needless to say, I cried!

With the milk safely delivered and hospital-grade pump ordered, we set about working out what to do with these little frozen bottles of milk. Each one felt so precious and wonderful. We set about defrosting the first one to give as top-ups that day. We'd been given a 'triple feeding' plan and were to use the donor milk



to make up for any shortfalls in the milk that I was expressing while my supply was being built back up. It's only now, looking back, that I realise what a bad situation we were in. We were nearly sent back to hospital on day six, as Ivy wasn't producing enough wet nappies. By three weeks, she still had not regained her 11% weight loss. Despite this, the healthcare professionals around us seemed to take a very laid-back approach.

The hospital-grade pump arrived the next day. The little bottles of donor milk were an absolute lifeline to us as I got to grips with a gruelling triple-feeding schedule. Each day we defrosted one or two bottles to supplement my milk, while I fed, pumped, topped Ivy up, then started all over again. It was a version of hell, but the little bottles were such a vision of hope!

One evening, I remember looking at the milk and thinking it looked strange and kind of separated. So I phoned the number HMB had given us to use for queries, and I ended up chatting to Dr Natalie Shenker [founder of HMB] who reassured me that all was fine and the milk just

needed swirling. At the time, she was driving through Marble Arch to deliver more donor milk to a mum in need. I remember thinking how incredible these 'milk angels' were!

I remember thinking how incredible these 'milk angels' were!

We continued using about 100 ml of the donor milk a day, crying fat tears on the odd occasion when Ivy wouldn't take a top-up from the bottle and we'd have to pour it away. If there's anything worse than your own wasted breastmilk, it's wasting someone else's!

Once the tongue-tie division was carried out a week after our first appointment with the tongue-tie practitioner, feeding got so much easier and the latch became better and better – but it was still taking time to build my supply. Our first weigh-in a week later was brilliant but a week after that, weight gain stalled again. We started to worry about whether we would have enough milk once the donor milk ran out, as my pumping output was minimal at best. Luckily, we were able to get another litre from HMB, which kept us going a while longer.

Three years on, tandem feeding with her sister!



Around this time, our postnatal doula signposted an informal milk-sharing network. We started looking into whether we could get milk from another family to help supplement our direct feeds, top-ups with my own milk, and the dwindling supply from HMB (who explained that normally their stocks go to really poorly babies and by then they didn't have any surplus milk, which we totally understood).

These incredible families really helped us to get through the toughest days, weeks and months of our lives.

We posted a message on the Facebook group and ended up being contacted by two mums, one over an hour away and another more local to us. My partner again got in the car and went to do a doorstep pickup of a bag full of wonderful frozen milk from a mum in Dunstable. Later on, once I was better able to leave the sofa and my feeding/pumping spot, I met up with the local mum in the John Lewis car park to pick up another bag. It felt so funny and covert!

When Ivy was seven weeks old, my best friend

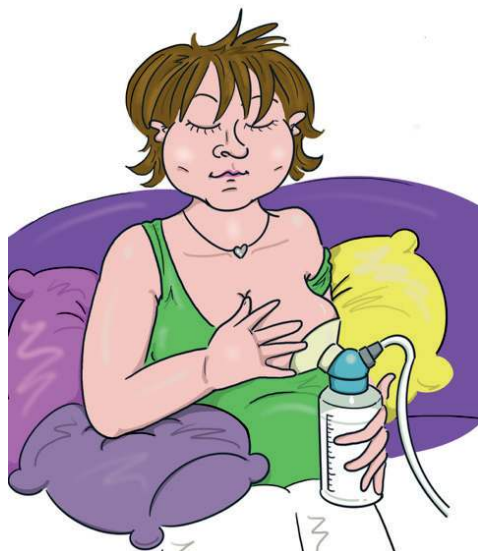


Image from Susie ©OddBod Soz Digital Design



came to stay with her 12-week-old, and offered some milk from her super-producing left boob. I watched in awe as she hand-expressed 100ml into a bottle with ease. I could only dream of such quantities. During the rest of her visit, she expressed a few more times, leaving a few bags of 'Aunty Clegg Gold' in the freezer when she left! I love that my daughter got to also drink the milk of my dear friend – a real team effort.

These incredible families really helped us to get through the toughest days, weeks, and months of our lives. Eventually, at four months old, we were able to wean Ivy off any top-ups from myself and others, and she became exclusively breastfed; our goal from day one.

We had managed with the help of so many other mothers, and without having to use a drop of formula: they say it takes a village and it was certainly true in this case!

Editors' note

Whatever your situation, we can help.

How to increase your milk production: laleche.org.uk/how-to-increase-your-milk-supply/

Sharing milk safely: laleche.org.uk/sharing-breastmilk/

Weaning from supplements: laleche.org.uk/weaning-from-supplements/

Happy birthday, LLLGB podcast!

By Sarah Fletcher and Maria Yasnova



This autumn, the Breastfeeding Matters podcast team are reflecting on two special birthdays: our host Sarah's baby turned one in June, and the podcast turns two!

Listen to this and other episodes on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.



LLL philosophy values the unique connection between mother and baby — in the early years, a baby's need to be with their mother is as basic as their need for food. The real question is: "how do we honour those intense needs whilst still caring for ourselves?"

LLLGB Breastfeeding Matters podcast, September 2025

Find the LLLGB podcast wherever you listen to podcasts!



Spotify



Apple

One pot coconut dal with flatbreads

by Charlotte Allam, LLL Shetland



I live on the Shetland Islands with my family. A good store-cupboard meal is not only useful, but essential here in winter! This is one of my many dog-eared recipes cut out of a magazine. I don't even need to look at it. It's a great one for 'variations on a theme', if, like me, you're in a house where not everyone will eat the same food.

Dal (Serves 4)

Ingredients

- 200g red lentils, rinsed
- Half a small onion or shallot, finely chopped (frozen is fine)
- One garlic clove, crushed (frozen is fine)
- Chopped fresh chilli, or dried chilli flakes (to taste)
- 400ml can coconut milk, or 100g creamed coconut dissolved in 400ml boiling water
- Rounded teaspoon of curry powder
- Teaspoon of turmeric (optional)
- Flat teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- Juice of half a lemon (or to taste)

Method

1. Put all the ingredients, except the lemon, in a saucepan. Add 400ml of water.
2. Bring slowly to the boil. Simmer at a very low heat for 15-20 minutes. Check and stir regularly.
3. Add a little extra water if sticking, or too thick. When the lentils are cooked, stir in the lemon juice.

Optional toppings

Finely chopped coriander or mint, spring onions, or more chilli.

Want to increase the veg?

Add a handful of fresh or frozen spinach a few minutes before the end of the cooking time. Serve with leftover veg, e.g., roasted cauliflower, squash, or sautéed greens.

Want to increase the protein?

Serve with a hardboiled or fried egg, or tofu.

Top with finely chopped nuts, e.g., peanuts, almonds, cashews, pistachios.

Quantities can be doubled. Freezes well.





Flatbreads (makes 6)

Ingredients

- 200g plain flour of choice (I use half wholemeal and half plain)
- Approx. a third of a teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil of choice
- 100ml (exactly) hot water

Method

1. Heat a non-stick frying pan at a very high heat (be careful if you're doing this with little ones!). It's important that the pan is very hot for the flatbreads to rise.
2. Mix flour(s) and salt in a bowl.
3. Make a well in the centre. Pour in the

water, followed by the oil. Mix until combined.

4. Knead on a lightly floured surface for a minute or so to bring together.
5. Divide into six pieces. Roll each piece very thinly to about the size of a side plate (keep the other pieces covered while you roll, to stop them from drying out).
6. Put the first flatbread into the very hot pan. It should puff up within about a minute. Turn it over and cook for another minute (or less) on the other side. Keep warm and covered (I use a clean tea towel) while you do the rest. Top with butter if desired!

These freeze well with baking paper between each flatbread. Reheat from frozen in a hot oven or pan for 30-60 secs.



Still going strong

By Christine Georgiadou, Enfield, London

Hello everybody! I had a very difficult start with sore nipples and bleeding, and blocked milk ducts, but I've exceeded my six-months target three times over. He is nearly two now, and the journey of breastfeeding is ongoing. I'm now supporting my sister on her breastfeeding journey with my little niece!

Me with my little Chris, May 2024. He was only seven months old on our hiking trip in Thrace, Greece.



Overnight you grew

By Storm Lawrence, LLL Barnet

My name is Storm Lawrence and I live in London. I have two amazing (and very energetic) children, three and a half and one year old – they keep me on my toes! I wrote this poem about two weeks after my second was born.

I went away and came home and
Overnight you grew,
I held a tiny baby wrapped
And you were suddenly huge.

Where did the time go?

I felt bad
Suddenly I was asking more of you,
To be gentle and careful
But you are still only two.

You are just a baby,
Still my baby,
And you need your mummy,
And I am split.

You've done so well and I'm so proud,
I can't believe how much you knew
Of what it meant, what you should do,
Overnight you grew.

I used to give everything
To my one little bestie,
They had my whole heart and mind
Unlimited access to me.

Then I was being shared,
Forced to choose,
And feeling as if I'm choosing wrong,
Like every time I lose.

I found myself missing
Our time alone,
Trying to preserve our old relationship
But in this time you've grown.



You feel it I know,
I try to make sure we do things one to one,
You say mummy I just need you!
And my heart weighs a tonne.

Whilst I try to give your sister
everything I gave you,
An impossible task
As I'm divided in two.

And overnight you grew...

As you've started to adapt,
You allow your sister to have me,
You accept others at bedtime and other
moments,
Until it gets too much and you call for mummy.

I tell you, you are still my baby,
Leave you letters under your pillow,
Make sure we spend time dancing, playing
dragons
Reading, talking about all the things you know.

In worrying how to get you settled
I hadn't thought what it would mean to me,
That actually I'd feel a loss,
Of everything we used to be.

But as times go on there are moments,
That make me smile and laugh,
Like when you try to tickle your sister,
Cuddle, sing and do a dance.

Like when I'm nursing her to sleep,
And after much struggle,
You nestle in and stroke her hand
Close your eyes and cuddle.

Or when you are roaring round the kitchen,
And she watches entertained,
Or when you ask where baby is
And invite her into your day.

I celebrate and cry at,
My wonder and challenge of two,
No one ever told me the hardest thing...
Which was, that overnight you grew.

NEW LEADERS!

We are delighted to welcome our newly accredited La Leche League Leaders:

Miranda Perkins LLL Devon and Cornwall

Marta Calhamar Gama LLL Cambridge

Elizabeth Di Sauro LLL Dyffryn Aman

Fátima Arrieta LLL Cambridge

Alejandra McCall LLL Farnham

Pegah Tahmasebi LLL Margate

Congratulations!



Children Talking

Once children start talking, we get a delightful window into their thoughts — including what they think about breastfeeding!

Share your toddler or preschooler's best quotes with us at bit.ly/lllgb-newsletter or by emailing editor@laleche.org.uk



"I sucked out all the beeboo. It gave me yawns too."

**Arthur, aged two and a half,
Kent**

This morning I was breastfeeding my six-month-old baby in bed when my five-year-old son thought it would be fun to squeeze my other breast – shaping it into a burger and then releasing it. He got a surprise when some milk squirted out on him 'like a fountain'! He found it highly amusing.

**Sarah, LLL Wetherby, West
Yorkshire**

"My baby is a boy baby named Daisy and he always needs mummy milk, because otherwise he always cries without it. He's so cute!"

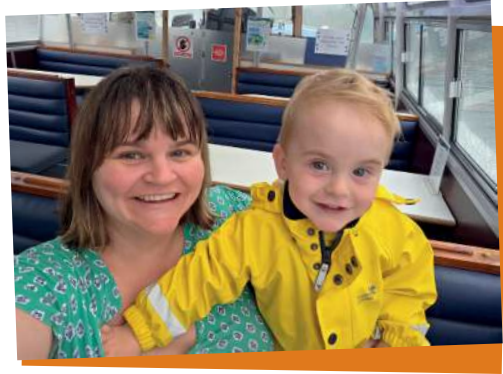
**Lena, aged four,
Kirkcudbrightshire,
Dumfries and
Galloway**



Oscar is obsessed with trains. He's started saying "Choo choooo" when he's breastfeeding – it's the funniest little thing and combines the joys of our journey with one of his favourite things!

For me breastfeeding, Oscar is that connection both of us crave after he has been bolting about for the day and it also gives me a bit of enforced downtime! His face lights up when I say "OK, milk time". I asked him what mummy's milk meant to him and his sole word was "Good". And I think that sums it up – it makes me feel good that I am still providing a wonderful form of connection with him and he feels good because we've had some cuddles and time together. So we both come away feeling good! We giggle together and have such a lovely time when we are breastfeeding.

Claire, LLL Cotswolds, Gloucestershire



**We would love to receive
your contributions**

**If you have a story,
toddler talk, poem, piece
of art or anything else to
share with us, please use
our form:**

**bit.ly/lllgb-newsletter
or email
editor@laleche.org.uk**



La Leche League Philosophy

- ♥ Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.
- ♥ Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.
- ♥ Alert and active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.
- ♥ Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying breastfeeding relationship and reliable milk production.
- ♥ Breastfeeding is enhanced by the loving support of the baby's father, a co-parent, a partner, and/or close family members who value the breastfeeding relationship.
- ♥ In the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother, which is as basic as his need for food.
- ♥ For the healthy, full-term baby, human milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of readiness for complementary foods, about the middle of the first year after birth.
- ♥ Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.
- ♥ Ideally, the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the child outgrows the need.
- ♥ From infancy on, children need loving guidance, which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.

