How two lesbian mamas share breastfeeding duties

Unlike my wife Melissa, I am not a lactation counselor. The only thing I knew about breastfeeding was that I wanted to do it when I had a baby. I never dreamed that I would be able to before birthing a child.

When Melissa was pregnant with our baby, she proposed the idea of co-nursing. I was both surprised and excited. About three months before baby Grace was born, I began taking birth control for the first time in my life. It seemed quite strange to be taking it not to prevent having a baby, but in order to provide for one. At the same time, I took a medication called domperidone.

About a month before Grace was born, I went off the birth control, started taking the herbs fenugreek and blessed thistle, and started using a breast pump around the clock. At first, I would get a couple of drops from each pumping session. If it wasn't for M, I would have been disappointed by this, but she was so enthusiastic. She told me it was a great start. Over time, I made more and more milk, but still tiny amounts.

Then came the birth of our little girl. When Melissa finally got out of the birth tub, I was able to hold Grace. It was so amazing to have this tiny miracle in my arms (well, I suppose I had two bundles since Grace was still attached to her placenta). This was the first moment I could breastfeed Grace. She latched on and began sucking away.

Since I had already been pumping and had milk, I actually began to worry that I would have too much milk. I know the newborn sucking is what brings on a mama's milk, so I didn't let her suck for too long. I didn't want to interfere with Melissa's milk supply. In that little bit of time of nursing Grace, I knew that it was all worth it.

Over the next couple of weeks, I exclusively pumped so that Melissa could exclusively breastfeed. We wanted to make sure that breastfeeding was established well for she and Grace. After a couple of weeks, I started taking one nursing session every day and we just increased from there. We made sure that Melissa pumped whenever I nursed.

One great aspect of co-nursing was my ability to nurse Grace to sleep. There were times that Grace wanted to comfort nurse but she didn't need a lot of milk. Melissa had a bit of an oversupply, and it was sometimes too much for her. I was able to nurse her to sleep. This was so beneficial for my bonding process with Grace. It was wonderful to have something special that only I could offer our daughter.

As Grace grew, so did our milk supplies. This led to another amazing aspect of having two nursing moms — we were able to donate all of the extra milk that we were making. So far, we have donated milk for six babies, and Melissa has also donated to a milk bank, so who knows how many more babies. 3575 ounces and counting!

With all of these boobs around, G isn’t very interested in bottles. When Melissa is at work, I can feed Grace, so Melissa doesn't need to worry about how long she is gone. I think that this has helped me to feel like a competent parent. I know that even if I couldn't breastfeed, I would still feel able to take care of our daughter, but for me, this really increased my confidence as a parent. Sometimes I think that I may have had feelings of jealousy watching Melissa feed Grace if I weren't able to. I would also be much more frustrated when Grace needed soothing, because sometimes all she wants is to nurse.

Moral of the story — I totally recommend inducing lactation if you are a non-gestational parent expecting a baby. Offbeat dads... I have heard that it is possible for men to induce lactation as well!

Guest post written by Liesbeth Koning

This is a post from my blog, but it was actually written by my wife, Liesbeth Koning.

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