



International Childbirth Education Association

*Teaching Breastfeeding - ICEA Teaching Idea Sheet #7*

Mothers who receive education regarding breastfeeding during the prenatal period have been shown to breastfeed for a longer period of time and view the experience, as well as their infants, more positively.

Frequently the reasons given for not choosing to breastfeed are based on misconceptions and lack of breastfeeding information. When time is limited, there are five key topics that should be included in a breastfeeding presentation. They are:

- advantages of breastfeeding to mother and baby
- positioning and latch
- frequency of feeding
- understanding of demand and supply
- avoidance of supplements
- the value of early and frequent skin-to-skin contact in getting breastfeeding started

If parents have a clear understanding of these areas, they may avoid the majority of the problems which lead to early weaning.

### **Teaching Aids**

To show the benefits of breastfeeding, breast anatomy, preparation, inverted nipples,

placement of pumps, proper latch-on and positioning:

- A cotton breast model is available commercially. Some allow the skin layer to be pulled back to show the internal anatomy.
- Alternatively, a stuffed, reinforced-toe nylon stocking can be employed. Stuff the end of the stocking with either fiberfill or a sponge ball (preferably orange, pink or yellow). Gather a little of the reinforced toe area with needle and thread to form the nipple. French knots can be sewn into the "areola" to represent the Montgomery glands.
- A balloon can also be used. Partially inflate a small, round balloon (be careful with color selection, selecting skin tone-like colors), leaving a "nipple" at the end. A line can be drawn around the un-inflated end to represent the areola.
- A stalk of broccoli or a bunch of grapes (or models/pictures of them) can be used to show the internal anatomy of the breast.
- Use a pretty box (wrap a shoe box with wrapping paper) with a fancy bow on the lid. Inside, place

items that can represent various breastfeeding benefits. Label the item with the benefit it represents. Pass it around and let students select an item and tell what it is and what benefit it represents. Examples of items: measuring tape (helps mom regain her figure); fake teeth (helps jaw development leading to straighter teeth); thermometer (it is always the right temperature); eyeglasses (support better vision); empty insulin vial or an insulin syringe (reduces mom's and baby's risk of diabetes), trash bag (less trash, better for the environment); diaper with roses glued on it (sweeter smelling stools).

### **To show positioning of baby, discreet nursing:**

- Put a nursing bra on over dark clothing and a larger shirt over that. Place a doll into proper nursing position and ask the group if they can see any of the bra or clothing underneath; you may also drape a baby blanket or shawl over your shoulder.
- Have dolls and pillow available to demonstrate proper positioning of the



infant. If possible, have dolls available for everyone in the class.

- Invite a couple from a previous class to discuss their breastfeeding experience and invite the woman to nurse during the discussion.

### **Teaching techniques:**

With the varying knowledge and experiences of the couples in a childbirth education class, a number of teaching techniques may need to be used. These are a few suggested techniques to get a discussion on breastfeeding started.

- Ask them (moms and partners alike) to finish these sentence: “I think I want our baby to be breastfed because . . .” and, “but I am concerned about . . .” Note common concerns, validate their concerns and fill in benefits they don’t mention.
- Film talkback: give the students a list of questions to consider while viewing a video and discuss after watching it.
- Give small groups a breastfeeding challenge (e.g., sore nipples, breastfeeding in public, engorgement) to investigate and report back on. They may search for solutions from the film, a book or handout, their own knowledge.
- Have them present that topic to the larger group.

### **For more information:**

- Provide a current resource list of individuals

and organizations in your area that they can call for assistance or support.

- Provide a list of reliable websites where they can find evidence-based breastfeeding information.
- Recommend attendance at a breastfeeding group, such as La Leche League, before the baby comes.