



Finding a Great Breastfeeding Class

About midway through your second trimester, your caregiver will suggest that you register for prenatal classes. Many moms assume that they need childbirth preparation only and that they will learn everything else in the hospital, from books, or “on the job”. This is ironic, because while the labor and birth process is usually over in 24 hours or less, feeding and caring for your baby will take years! As a result, it is in your best interest to find out what classes available in your community including course content, rather than choosing the first class that is offered to you.

Breastfeeding in particular can be a learning process for both you and your baby. Most Americans have not grown up exposed to infant’s breastfeeding as a cultural norm, so we have lost a lot of the natural instincts. When seeking out a breastfeeding class, you will want to evaluate the content. First, find out your options-most hospitals and birth centers provide a wide range of prenatal classes, but so do private practice lactation consultants, doctor’s offices, and independent educators. To find classes, check out the yellow pages, local parenting publications, individual websites or talk to your caregiver. Make a list with contact information and other details such as cost, dates offered, etc. before calling. Then when you do call, before registering, ask lots of questions about class content. Some examples are:

- How long is the class? Is there time allowed for questions, even if the class goes over?
- Will the class cover procedures and routines common to the place where I will be delivering?
- How much time is spent on latch, positioning, and signs of adequate intake? (it should be at least half of the class)
- Will I be given resource information for help both in and out of the hospital?
- What kind of information is offered about milk expression? (It should not be a sales job, but rather a range of options from hand expression, to manual pumps, to electric)
- What do I do if I have problems or complications?

Often, especially with a large organization, the individuals who handle inquiries or registration are administrative people and do not have a lot of information about the class content. If this occurs, simply ask to speak to one of the instructors or the program coordinator.

In addition, it’s a good idea to ask about the qualifications and experience of the instructor. A board certified lactation consultant (IBCLC) is considered to be the gold standard in the field; however, an educator who has been teaching this class for several years may be just as qualified. You will want someone who works with breastfeeding mothers on a regular basis and has a wide range of experience. They should also be approachable and open to questions and discussion.

Mothers who are well educated before delivery are less likely to experience breastfeeding complications. In addition, it can actually save you money in terms of product information and resources. A good prenatal breastfeeding class will increase your confidence, help you prepare for potential problems and reinforce or clarify what you are reading. Whether this is your first baby or your third, seek out a quality class and instructor for a positive breastfeeding experience.