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Book Reviews

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Saggy Boobs and Other Breastfeeding Myths by Valerie Finigan; embroidered illustration by Lou Gardiner

Pinter and Martin 2009
ISBN-10: 1905177232
ISBN-13: 978-1905177233
Publisher's recommended price £5.99

Reviewed by
Gill Boden

Find this book on Amazon

Myths about breastfeeding exploding all over the place in a rainbow coloured embroidered set of cartoons make this attractive book a brilliant and unstuffy way to give important evidence about the benefits of breastfeeding to mothers and babies: this would be a perfect book to have on the coffee table at a peer-support breastfeeding session.

The book began as an idea by Val Finigan, infant-feeding coordinator for the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. Val wanted to work with mums and breastfeeding groups to dispel myths and Lou Gardiner was commissioned to work with breastfeeding support groups to make embroidered illustrations of the myths and rumours they had heard.

Commonly expressed doubts about breastfeeding that we've all heard, such as your baby will wake up all the time, be clingier, not grow as well and so on, are dispensed with simply and authoritatively; the

positive aspects are cheerfully brought out and the effect is refreshing. Research is mentioned in a calm, authoritative way but not referenced. This little and amusing book is a pleasure to read and a lovely present for a new Mum.

Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture: Controversies and challenges, edited by Victoria Hall Moran and Fiona Dykes

Quay Books 2013
ISBN-10: 1856424359
ISBN-13: 978-1856424356
Publisher's recommended price £29.99

Reviewed by
Clare Bartos

Find this book on Amazon

This book comprises an interesting collection of topical subjects relating to the subject matter, presented in an evidence-based manner. Not a light read, the writers present their chapters in an intellectually stimulating manner ; they invite the reader to consider innovative ideas, to update their knowledge base and to challenge existing beliefs and practices.

A holistic 'socio-biological perspective' to maternal and infant nutrition permeates, and the complex interactions between physiological, socio-economic, political and cultural factors are considered in relation to each topic.

In the first chapter Fiona Dykes and Victoria Hall Moran look at transmitted nutritional deprivation from mother to child. Complex issues are considered and the need for more research in this area is highlighted. What is made clear is the life long influence of good or bad nutrition on not only mothers but their offspring too. The authors refer to research that shows that a mother's nutritional status throughout her life, including her own in-utero experience, is more significant to the wellbeing of her baby than her nutritional status during pregnancy. The impact of poverty on health is explicit and the need to address the issues surrounding nutritional deprivation highlighted.

In the second chapter Victoria Hall Moran discusses nutrition during adolescent pregnancy. She describes the nutritional needs of adolescent mothers and the broader socio-economic, cultural and behavioural factors that are important too. The need for a multidisciplinary, lifestyle approach is described, as is the need for more research.

Darren Hart looks at the evidence surrounding eating and drinking in labour, questioning current practice and the lack of a united policy.

Sally Inch writes about feeding the newborn baby. She considers the physiological, socio-economic, political and cultural factors surrounding breast and bottle feeding. She also charts the historical development of breastmilk substitutes and the problems associated with formula milks.

In the following chapter Magda Sachs reflects on the feeding policy for HIV positive mothers and their babies in the UK. Another fascinating read, it opens eyes to the shortsightedness of policy makers and also to the lack of conviction surrounding the advantages of breastfeeding.

Sue Battersby explores attitudes towards infant feeding in mothers, health professionals and society at large. The importance of self-awareness and the need for reflection on our attitudes to infant feeding are made clear and a model for use in education is suggested.

Alison Spiro describes her research with Gujarati women. She examines their attitudes to breastfeeding and to decision making. She looks at how cultural and religious beliefs, alongside their kinship structures, influence infant feeding. This information offers an interesting insight into how another culture's views differ from those of the indigenous UK population.

Mavis Kirkham and colleagues describe 'Breastfriends' Doncaster - the story of their peer support project. This interesting chapter clearly demonstrates the benefits that peer support programmes have to offer.

Gill Rapley suggests that baby-led weaning is the natural progression for breastfed babies and suggests further research into its suitability for bottle-fed babies.

Fiona Dykes and Victoria Hall Moran summarise with a focus on the importance of considering nutrition and infant feeding within the broader context of a socio-biological framework. Their comments made me wonder, when nutrition holds the key to so many health and social benefits, how we can allow commercial interests to dictate the future health of our nation.

This book will be of interest to all who want to learn more about the importance of maternal and infant nutrition and the complex factors influencing them. The comprehensive references will make this an extremely useful resource for many. I would suggest that it is a 'must read' for all those concerned with policy-making.

Breastfeeding and Medication by Wendy Jones

Routledge 2013
ISBN-10: 0415641063
ISBN-13: 978-0415641067
Publisher's recommended price £28.99

Reviewed by
Emma Ashworth

Find this book on Amazon

Wendy Jones is well known amongst breastfeeding supporters for her work running the Breastfeeding Network's Drugs in Breastmilk helpline. Wendy is both a pharmacist and a breastfeeding counsellor.

As a breastfeeding counsellor myself, I regularly refer women to the BfN website (www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk) for information on drug safety, and was fully expecting the book to be extremely useful. In fact, I used it the day after it arrived in the post for myself, and took it along to the pharmacy with me to discuss a specific drug with the pharmacist. She then decided to buy a copy too! It is now my main reference book while on the ABM breastfeeding helpline and barely a session passes that I don't refer to it at least once to give mums information to take back to their GP or other healthcare professional.

Wendy Jones has worked out the safety of hundreds of common drugs using a variety of methods and evidence sources, clearly referenced in this book, allowing mothers to make an informed choice about treatment, and giving prescribers the ability to really understand the safety of each drug for breastfeeding mothers. The reference section, which fills about half of the book, is clear and easy to navigate. It includes detailed information on Wendy's conclusions about each drug as well as references and explanations of specific instances of, for example, reported adverse reactions. There is a very clear and detailed explanation of the way that she has calculated drug safety, giving prescribers information quickly, but in-depth, so they can make decisions about prescribing an item off-licence.

If this wasn't enough to make every doctor, health visitor, midwife, pharmacist and breastfeeding counsellor rush out to buy this book (and they should), Wendy has also written the clearest explanation of the importance of breastmilk that I have ever read. She discusses breastfeeding from a historical, cultural and scientific perspective and explains why it is that breastfeeding is so incredibly important to the health of both babies and mothers. She writes for the medically trained with full biological explanations, but her writing is still clear and fully accessible to the lay reader. There is an excellent section about common breastfeeding/infant feeding concerns, both real and common myths, including mastitis, thrush, worries about low milk supply, milk intake, Raynaud's syndrome, colic and so on.

The importance of good positioning and attachment is referred to time and again, together with their relevance to good milk transfer, and how poor position and attachment can lead to a multitude of

misdiagnoses which are then unnecessarily medicated. This underlines the real value of this superb book - the combination of a highly experienced breastfeeding counsellor and pharmacist to produce a depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject that I truly have not found anywhere else.

The Food of Love by Kate Evans

Myriad Editions 2008
ISBN-10: 0954930959
ISBN-13: 978-0954930950
Publisher's recommended price £12.99

Reviewed by
Virginia Hatton

Find this book on Amazon

The Food of Love is an illustrated breastfeeding handbook, first published in 2008. I first heard of it through the author's blog when I came across the post 'Lashing back against the backlash' (www.thefoodoflove.org/lashing-back-against-the-backlash/) which addresses the tangled argument of 'breastfeeding as anti-feminist'. This quote particularly resonated with me: 'Look, this is amazing! Food comes out of our chests! And it grows incredibly healthy children! And it's free! And it feels nice! And it's full of stem cells! And it cures cancer! And it kills HIV!' At the time I was breastfeeding my two-week-old baby and thought, 'Must get around to reading the book!'. Now 15 months later and still breastfeeding, I've finally managed to read it and would highly recommend it to anyone who wants to breastfeed or who wants to share their passion for breastfeeding with others. What makes this book stand out among breastfeeding manuals are the hilariously realistic cartoon illustrations. The topic of breastfeeding can be a minefield of cultural taboos and judgement - and these cartoons portray this reality, as well as the blissful joy of breastfeeding for mum and baby, in a non-patronising, entertaining way. The illustrations not only offer detailed practical information on breastfeeding positions and techniques, but will make you laugh out loud. You'll have to read it for yourself to find out what Kate's sister's second most embarrassing moment was, which has now become an 'urban legend' among breastfeeding mothers.

The book also explores and illustrates topics related to attachment parenting such as co-sleeping, sling wearing and full-term breastfeeding. However, the book does not go indepth about scenarios where mothers may need additional support such as breastfeeding after a caesarean birth or accessing and using donor milk.

The entire book is grounded in evidence-based research and also includes a well-referenced section on additional resources. From my experience I believe there is no replacement for good human face-to-face support, but this book is just about the next best thing.

If you purchase online from www.thefoodoflove.org.uk (£15, free postage within the UK) Kate will write

a dedication if you request one. It's an ideal gift not only for an expectant or new mum, but also a trainee doula, antenatal teacher or breastfeeding supporter.