AIMS For a better birth...

Reviews; Gestational diabetes, Why Starting Solids Matters, The Positive Birth Book.

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Gestational Diabetes
Why Starting Solids Matters
The Positive Birth Book

Gestational Diabetes



By Deborah Hughes AIMS, June 2017
ISBN 978-1-87441-339-4
also available as an e-book.

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News Flash – AIMS has just published a new book about gestational diabetes.

AIMS is very pleased to announce the publication of our new book, Gestational Diabetes. We know from our helpline, and from social media, that that many women diagnosed with gestational diabetes, (GD) are concerned because they are under pressure to submit to routine care, but feel they don't have the information they need to make important decisions that potentially seriously impact on their own health and that of their baby. This book addresses that problem.

AIMS commissioned Deborah Hughes, an experienced and respected midwife, to write this book setting out the issues, the research and the options. It will enable women to take time to think about tests, treatments, and lifestyle changes; what they need and want from their health care professionals and to learn from accounts of other women's experiences, highlighting how varied experiences and decisions can be. We are very grateful to Deborah for taking on this very complex subject. She carefully takes the reader through why there is a concern, what is known about the risks and what may help in terms of

lifestyle changes and treatments. We believe this book will make it much easier for women to understand what is happening to them as it explains what risks and benefits may be involved with not just GD, but also with being tested and or treated.

Jennifer Williams worked with Deborah to provide the helpful infographics and insightful, often funny, illustrations that bring the book to life.

This book will enable the reader to make her own assessment of the risks and benefits. At AIMS we know that one size doesn't fit all.

Shane Ridley

Why Starting Solids Matters

By Amy Brown
Pinter and Martin, 2017
ISBN 978-1-78066-500-9

My admiration for this series of miniature books grows with each one. Why Starting Solids Matters is another little gem of a book. Amy Brown is ideal as the author: she has researched infant feeding for at least a decade, her PhD was on the importance of baby led breastfeeding and she has continued to research the influences on breastfeeding and the introduction of solid food. In her introduction she summarises the aims of the book, which are to look at the guidance behind introducing solid foods, the evidence behind it and the wider context. She asks whether there is one right way to introduce solid food or is it better to respond to your individual babies needs, (as she says, 'Spoiler : responsiveness is the key').

She has also been bringing up her own three children, so while her examination of all the factors around starting solid food is informed by a thorough understanding of the evidence, her words on the subject are warm and wise. I do think this is an ideal book for mothers who want to understand the exciting business of introducing babies to the world of the pleasures of food and eating.

I hope that those who advise mothers will read this book too. It is very sad when professionals respond to mother's anxieties with scanty, contradictory or, even worse, patronising advice. I'm afraid that this can happen in the area of nutrition where professionals often receive very little training. (Try asking your professional advisors how much training they got.) I am reminded of a young mother I know who wanted to discuss moving on from breast milk with her health visitor, and was under pressure to introduce cow's milk. When she told her that she was trying goat's milk for her son, the HV replied in a scandalised voice, '*but goat's milk is for baby goats'*. The young mother replied *'and cows milk is for... ?'*.

Much of what Amy Brown says about introducing solid food might seem like common sense but mothers' confidence can be undermined by well-meaning public health messages and by commercial interests in the field of breast milk substitutes (as Why the Politics of Breastfeeding Matters in the same series so

brilliantly identifies). Of course this has also happened to some extent with commercially produced baby foods where there is money to be made in suggesting that introducing solids into a baby's diet is inherently difficult, requiring much pureeing and so on.

Amy Brown's background is in psychology and she reminds us that when babies are ready to eat they are programmed to do so, generally with gusto, and to eat what we eat with us. Eating is a social affair with important cultural aspects: we don't have to teach babies to do it. This little book is a gem of enlightened and informed common sense, which should reinforce women's confidence in their ability to cope with each stage with growing ease and enjoyment.

Gill Boden

The Positive Birth Book: A new approach to pregnancy, birth and the early weeks

By Milli Hill
Pinter and Martin, 2017
SBN 978-1-78066-430-9



By Milli Hill Pinter and Martin, 2017 ISBN 978-1-78066-430-9

The Positive Birth Book is exactly what it says on the tin: it is described as *'challenging negativity and fear of childbirth and brimming with everything you need to know about labour and birth and the early days of parenting'*, and that is what it is.

The cover is colourful with a particularly gorgeous baby picture; the tone is upbeat and cheerful. Milli Hill covers what you bring to birth, what labour is really like, an A to Z of coping strategies, choice, planning your positive home birth, hospital birth, birth centre and caesarean birth and concludes with birth of a mother. Her style is chatty and friendly; she uses phrases such as 'fabby dabby' and suggests that Independent Midwives 'give a shit'. I guess that it is aimed mainly at first time mothers who would not necessarily consider themselves 'alternative'. Milli seems to assume that her readers will not necessarily embrace 'hippiness' and, for example, when discussing the importance of the microbiome that readers may find the idea of bacterial seeding 'yucky'. Her tone is one of exhortation to question the medical

consensus around birth and ask women to reconsider, saying for instance the there is *'plenty of solid evidence'* for moving freely in labour but does not give references for her recommendations. She does however recommend some books including the book The Microbiome Effect and includes many resources including an idea of where to look for evidence.

The layout with illustrations and stories is attractive, and I particularly like sections on such things as 'mother blessing', 'Zwischen', (the last days of pregnancy), 'gender reveal parties', 'Mother Assisted Caesareans', some of which are things many women, me included, might never have thought. She briefly mentions relactating which is another thing that most women don't realise is even a possibility.

The Positive Birth Book has been published during the battle to retain Independent Midwifery: Milli is very positive about IMs and suggests that the personal budgets mentioned in the recent National Maternity Review will enable women to choose continuity of carer, I hope she is right. I also hope that her book will fulfill its purpose of bringing ideas about birth now considered alternative back into the mainstream again.

Gill Boden