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Reviews: Trust your Body, Trust your Baby; Why Mothers' Medication Matters

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Trust your Body, Trust your Baby: How learning to listen changes everything

Why Mothers' Medication Matters

Trust your Body, Trust your Baby: How learning to listen changes everything

By Rosie Newman

Published by Pinter and Martin, 2017 

RRP £11.99

When you are pregnant, you are bombarded with information. Well-meaning friends and family will give you all sorts of advice, including recommendations for a plethora of birth books. Most advice falls into one of two camps: that the medical world knows best or that your body was designed to give birth. And whilst people often say 'trust your instinct', a newly pregnant woman is then left to wonder what that actually means. How are you supposed to know? Isn't that what doctors go to university for? And this idea of trust in your body and in your baby then reaches beyond the process of birth, into early years parenting and the many decisions you are faced with as a parent, giving rise to a whole slew of parenting books.

In this gem of a book, Rosie has managed to skilfully unpick and explore the idea of trusting your body and baby, in an immensely readable text which consolidates evidence, interviews, case studies and the lived experiences of families. While I'd heard the notion of trusting your body when I was pregnant, this book would have been really useful to give me confidence and ideas of how to go about it. The book also goes beyond birth and tackles some of the key parenting conundrums of the modern age.

Rosie's writing style is warm. I felt as though she was sitting opposite to me in a café, like old friends catching up on our pregnant years rather than offering an encyclopaedia of information. This style definitely makes the content sink in.

The chapters of the book are laid out logically: First the pregnancy, then the birth itself, then the immediate postpartum period. It next tackles beautifully important aspects of early years parenting - including early attachment, sleep, milestones and potty training. (*Ed: never before have I found the rather specialist topic of elimination communication slipped into a parenting text so engagingly, reaching audiences that would never pick up a book on the topic itself. Very clever!)*

Throughout the book, the message to trust your body, baby and nature is like a golden thread: To let pregnancy, birth and early childhood play out without trying to control them, but rather letting them wash over and change you. As a parent, we have all heard many of the terms Rosie talks about, such as attachment parenting or the sphincter law. However, what is beautiful about this book is how she talks about them in the context of her own experiences, thereby interpreting how these textbook concepts that the reader may wish to explore might work in real-life – without judgement or fear. This to me makes this book very powerful for new parents.

There are many, many books which go into every aspect of the contents of this book, but in far greater detail and backed up with facts and figures. This book doesn't claim to be one of those books, and that is precisely what makes this book powerful: it is instead an easy to read for an expectant/new parent, without an over-reliance on jargon.

I would recommend this book as a great introduction for any parent/pregnant couple interested a physiological birth and/or natural parenting, or even for someone who is plain curious about how we got to where we are as a species. And as Rosie says, trusting yourself begins with this book: it's quite easy to pick and choose the concepts that appeal to you and let go of the rest.

Sangheetha Parthasarathy

Why Mothers' Medication Matters

Why Mothers' Medication Matters

By Wendy Jones 

Published by Pinter and Martin, 2017

As a breastfeeding mother, finding evidence-based advice on what medications I could take whilst breastfeeding has been a source of anxiety, with wide-ranging and conflicting information available all over the internet and from healthcare professionals. Even as a pharmacist myself, I have found it difficult to pull together the evidence to help me make decisions about taking medicines, so I can only imagine what it is like for mothers who don't have pharmacy training.

As part of Pinter and Martin's popular 'Why it matters' series, Wendy has produced a priceless, comprehensive resource with this little book. It covers all of the important information that mothers need to know about breastfeeding while taking medications. The chapters are carefully organised for easy reference, starting with general issues about prescribing for mothers and ending with a fantastic chapter comparing breastmilk with formula. All information is evidence based, with a comprehensive reference list, and written in an engaging friendly style.

The introductory chapter is wonderfully reassuring in busting myths around taking medications while breastfeeding, highlighting the lack of clinical data and limited information available from manufacturers in their patient information leaflets (so commonly used by healthcare professionals to advise mothers on the use of medications in breastfeeding). It also highlights the general lack of healthcare professional training in this area, and therefore the importance of seeking out the best evidence to allow mothers to make informed decisions about taking medicines in pregnancy and while breastfeeding, related to their particular situation.

The book has a strong emphasis on medication and breastfeeding, although it also covers the use of medicines in pregnancy, labour and birth. It carefully reinforces the idea that in most cases breastfeeding can continue, and provides advice for commonly used medicines, whilst making it clear where there are exceptions. Wendy's passion for breastfeeding and maintaining the breastfeeding relationship if desired is evident throughout. I found this wonderfully reassuring to read as a mother. It also makes some obvious points that are not often taken into account, for example highlighting that there are risks of stopping breastfeeding (to baby and mother). When a mother is advised to stop feeding in order to take a medicine, therefore, Wendy advises that these risks should be balanced against the need to take a medicine and the small risks associated with medicine transfer through breastmilk. Information on the management of mastitis, thrush and engorgement is also included, along with other common problems encountered during breastfeeding.

On a practical level, the book is very well indexed, so readers can access the specific information they need without reading the full text if required – very helpful for a busy healthcare professional or mother. The text is very heavy in places, with some jargon that may prove confusing for non-healthcare professional readers, but this is balanced carefully against the use of appropriate medical terminology, making it accessible to all. Please note, however, that if you are looking for advice on herbal medicines, this book provides limited information.

I could go on and on about this fabulous book, which I will certainly be returning to many times over the coming years both as a pharmacist and as a mother. It is an excellent resource which has boosted my confidence in the use of medicines in breastfeeding. It is also lovely to find support for breastfeeding at a time when, as a mother, I am in the minority for how I choose to feed my babies.

Anna Culy