

I am a transgender dad in a gay relationship who breastfeeds his baby boy

offbeatfamilies.com



Trevor breastfeeding his son.

Near the end of my pregnancy, I went to my first breastfeeding support meeting, facilitated by [La Leche League](#). I was excited at the opportunity to learn, and terribly nervous in a room full of strangers — I was a guy at a women-only peer-to-peer help group.

When it came to be my turn to speak, I gave my carefully prepared spiel: "My name is Trevor and I am able to be pregnant because I am transgender. This means that I was born female but transitioned to male by taking hormones and having chest surgery. When my partner and I decided to start a family, we got advice from my doctors and I stopped taking my testosterone. My baby is due in April. Because my surgery removed most of my breast tissue, I don't know how much I'll be able to breastfeed, but I really want to try."

With my face bright red and my palms sweating, I looked up to see many of the women in the room nodding their heads and smiling at me. By this point I was quite far along in my pregnancy, so they knew I was the real thing. Over the course of the meeting, people discussed their various nursing challenges and asked each other questions. I mostly remained silent. After it was over, several women came to me to say how impressed they were by my determination to breastfeed and that they hoped it would go well for me. I was ecstatic at their response — I'd been initially unsure of whether I'd even be allowed to attend an LLL meeting as a guy, and I certainly didn't expect to be welcomed with open arms. This was the beginning of what became an incredible support system that I credit with helping me to nurse my baby for his first year of life.

At the start of our pregnancy, my partner Ian and I assumed we were going to formula-feed. We signed up for samples of the stuff — how could we resist free food? We like a good deal just as well as the next guy. Besides, how could I breastfeed without breasts? And then I started reading endlessly about birth and babies. Quickly I learned that I might be able to produce a small amount of milk despite my surgery, and that even drops of breast milk would benefit our baby. I became not just committed, but passionate about breastfeeding.

Following an unmedicated birth, my midwife assisted me in latching on my newborn, Jacob. To everyone's delight and amazement, we could all hear him enjoying his first swallows of colostrum, the rich milk full of protective antibodies that is produced in the first days after birth. We called my best friend and La Leche League leader, Simone, to come over right away. When Simone entered our bedroom and saw me trying to latch Jacob on, this time without the help of my midwife, she thought it was impossible — that there just isn't enough tissue there for a baby to latch onto. But she didn't let on, and instead suggested different ways for me to try holding my meagre chest tissue so that Jacob could grab on. I persisted, and so did my baby.

Simone came to our home four times in the next 48 hours and answered my phone calls late at night as well as early in the morning. Jacob got stronger as I became more proficient in positioning him and we learned together. However, when he was four days old, it became clear that he wasn't gaining weight adequately and that we needed to start supplementing him. Friends, and friends of friends, donated their breast milk for our child and now I faced yet another challenge: using a [Supplemental Nursing System](#) (SNS).

An SNS consists of a bottle of supplement with a tube going into it. You put one end of the tube next to your nipple and then latch the baby onto your nipple and the tube at the same time. This way, the baby gets both the milk that the parent can produce and also the supplement at once. Using an SNS avoids the "nipple confusion" that can come from bottle feeding. Keeping the baby at the breast also helps to stimulate the parent's own body to create more milk — breastfeeding depends on the feedback of a supply and demand system, after all. At first it took three of us to position Jacob, hold the SNS and its tubing, and make an effective "breast tissue sandwich" for the baby to hold onto. For the next two weeks, Ian had to help me with every single feeding. We struggled through the exhaustion of sitting up through nursing sessions day and night.

We found more donated breast milk online through the Facebook group [Human Milk 4 Human Babies](#). We interviewed donors, asking about blood test results, medications, and drug and alcohol use. We accepted donations from all kinds of people, including Mennonites, Mormons, and a military family. All of these generous people dedicated their time and energy to giving our child a healthy start in life. In the end we were able to find enough breast milk for Jacob to stay off of formula entirely.

As Jacob enters toddlerhood, breastfeeding is about far more than the food. I can nurse him to sleep when he is wild yet far beyond exhausted, and latch him on to calm him when he's had an unfortunate adventure with the corner of a coffee table. Nursing has taken on dimensions that I never imagined would be possible for us. Best of all, when I attend La Leche League meetings nowadays, I am able to give advice to brand new breastfeeding parents. If a new mom worries that she doesn't have enough breast milk because her baby seems to want to eat so very often, I can share my story: we were supplementing our son heavily, but he continued to want to feed in many frequent sessions. Sometimes, he cried at night despite having as much milk as he could eat.

Those early days can be tough, and I was fortunate to have extraordinary support. I will forever think of our many compassionate helpers — the La Leche League leaders, our friends, and the complete strangers we met online — as Jacob's milk buddies. It certainly took a village for us to breastfeed, and I am so grateful that it happened.

Guest post written by [Trevor](#)

Trevor MacDonald lives in Winnipeg, Canada, with his partner, baby and dog. He is currently a stay-at-home dad, and has an honours BA in political science from the University of British Columbia. While remaining secure in his identity as a gay man, he breastfeeds his baby boy because of the zillions of studies that prove that breastfeeding is a healthy, biologically normal choice for babies. He writes about his queer breastfeeding adventures on his blog at milkjunkies.net.

<http://milkjunkies.net>

Copyright © 2003 - 2015 Offbeat Empire . All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction in part or in whole is prohibited.