



Parent Connection



HENRY FORD DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

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We know life may be challenging right now and we want you to know your Henry Ford pediatrician is still here for you. Below we have collected articles and resources we think you might find helpful. Information in our newsletters is yours to use when it is helpful to you and yours to disregard when it is not. We hope you and your family are staying safe during this pandemic.

How Three Mothers Fed Their Newborns

Determining how to feed your child can be an overwhelming decision, especially for first time parents. Do you formula feed? Breastfeed? Both? Every parent of a newborn has a different story or journey surrounding feeding and many of those stories are full of indecision, guilt and fear. Below are three stories from three mothers on how they made their decision. In the end, there is no one right or wrong way to feed a child. What works best for you, your baby, and your family is what is best for you. Someone else's best may look different than yours and that's just fine. Every parent wants a baby that is fed and happy and the choice you make to get there is the right one for you.

Formula Feeding

I have an 18-month-old daughter. During my pregnancy I had many people ask me, "Are you planning to breast feed?" My response was always "Yes." Since this was my first child, I truly did not know what I was saying yes to. I did not realize how difficult breastfeeding could be. While in the hospital after having my daughter, I tried breastfeeding with the help of nurses and lactation consultants. I left the hospital with a large amount of anxiety, not knowing how I was going to breastfeed without their assistance. I also left the hospital feeling like breastfeeding was the only choice I had. I spent the first weekend home from the hospital attempting to breastfeed on my own. A mixture of my daughter not latching well, me not knowing what I was doing, and not being able to handle the pain associated with breastfeeding made for a very difficult and stressful weekend.

It was at my daughter's first pediatrician appointment that the doctor said it was my choice and I did not have to breastfeed if it wasn't right for me. Following that appointment, I decided to exclusively formula feed. Formula helped ease a lot of the anxiety I was feeling. I was no longer worried about her receiving enough food and I could rationalize the pain because I knew it would subside in time. Formula feeding also let me enjoy just spending time with my new baby, instead of constantly stressing about when she was going to need to feed again. I truly feel like I made the right choice for me, baby, and family. I also have great respect for mothers who choose breastfeeding, as I was able to fully learn the commitment it takes.

Combo Feeding

It was my intention to nurse my son and not use formula. That was what felt best for me. But it turned out that exclusively breastfeeding was not what was best for my son. When my son was born 6 weeks early, his calcium was low and giving him formula was the least invasive way to treat that. He also had trouble latching, so I spent his first 6 weeks exclusively pumping. I was doing my best, but had trouble pumping often enough throughout the day and night. That may have affected my milk supply, I will never know. I usually pumped the minimum per pump, about 2-4 oz total. Formula continued to be part of our lives.

Once my son was able to latch and nurse effectively, it took a while to eliminate bottles when I was with him, but that eventually happened. When I returned to work, I had the flexibility to pump frequently, but could never get enough breastmilk for daycare, so I supplemented with formula. Looking back on that time, I am glad I was able to finally nurse and that helped me a lot with mother-son bonding; something that took a little while for me. I am also appreciative of the support I had from friends and lactation consultants. However, I do wish I could go back in time and tell myself to be content with combo feeding and stop considering myself a failure. I would tell myself to pump during work just to keep up my milk production, and not worry about the amount. That formula would take care of the rest. My son thrived as an infant and is doing well now. That is what is most important.

Breastfeeding

I always assumed breastfeeding would just happen naturally. I was unaware that it was a skill that both you and your baby must learn. No matter what you are told, not all babies instinctively can latch and draw milk. My daughter could not get a good latch for the first two weeks of her life. There is not a tool, hold or trick out there that I did not try to get a good latch, but it was not happening for us. I was devastated. I cried about it constantly, worried she would starve or be malnourished and mainly blamed myself nonstop. I have a very supportive husband, friends who are pediatricians and friends who didn't breastfeed who all tried to help me not feel so guilty, but I felt like I was failing my daughter. I was worried about nipple confusion, so for two weeks I pumped my milk and fed it to my baby with a syringe. Looking back, it blows my mind the lengths I went to in order to exclusively breastfeed. I'm not sure why my mind was so set; I had no negative feelings about formula. It just felt like a personal failure. My first challenge as a mother and I wasn't meeting it. I wish I would have given myself some grace – and given my daughter a bottle!

After two weeks of struggles and syringes, I went to a second breastfeeding support group with a different lactation consultant. I told myself if this didn't help, I was switching to formula. At the end of the meeting, the consultant asked if she could show me how to get my daughter to latch. I had no expectations it would work but I said yes. She changed my hold slightly and showed me how to hold my daughter and my breast at the same time. My daughter latched perfectly and hasn't let go since. Seriously, she's 5 years old now and still nurses at bedtime. But that's a different topic everyone has an opinion on for another day! For today, try to remember in the thick of all the hormones, emotions, suggestions and opinions that however you choose to feed your baby is the right way. You should never feel guilty for taking care of you and your baby.

Finding a Lactation Consultant

As you read above, breastfeeding may come easy for some, but it's very common to experience issues at some point in the journey. Having a support system to help along the way can help a parent make decisions that are best for them and the baby. Finding a lactation consultant can be the first step in this journey. What is a [lactation consultant](#)? Lactation consultants are nursing professionals who help by providing education and preparation around breastfeeding for expectant parents. It's always best to make sure your lactation consultant is an [International Board Certified Lactation Consultant](#). In addition to a lactation consultant, having a community of other parents that are on the journey with you can also provide some comfort. One popular site for parents to share their stories and other resources that may be helpful is [The Leaky Boob](#). Henry Ford also has [lactation consultants](#) available to help.



Midwife, Doula, or OBGYN

Whether you [choose a Midwife, Doula, or OBGYN](#), everyone's pregnancy journey is different. There are many different routes and things to consider when making decisions on pregnancy care. Knowing the difference between a Midwife, Doula, and OBGYN can make your decision a little easier. [A Midwife is](#) a registered nurse with a master's degree in nursing. Midwives often deal with low-risk pregnancies and are unable to perform C-sections. There are many [myths surrounding Midwives](#). For example, that they will not use pain medication or epidurals during delivery. A midwife can be a great choice and often works in connection with the doctors on staff. [An Obstetrician-Gynecologist, or OBGYN](#), is a trained medical doctor that specializes in all aspects of women's health, particularly pregnancy and childbirth. The main difference between a midwife and OBGYN, is an OBGYN can perform surgeries, for example a C-section. An OBGYN can also oversee a high-risk pregnancy. A Doula is also a care provider many patients seek during pregnancy. [A Doula is a professional](#) that can provide physical and emotional support during pregnancy. They are not medical professionals, but provide support, assist with decision making, and often are present throughout the length of pregnancy and even postpartum. There are many opinions surrounding pregnancy care, however the choice that is right for you, your family, and your baby is always best.

Helping Your Child Understand Their Changing Body

As each person develops, their [body begins to experience changes](#). These changes happen no matter your gender identity. Preparing our children for these changes in advance can help them feel less anxious when the changes happen. Using [reliable resources](#) to refresh ourselves on all of the possible changes can also help guide our conversations to make sure we are prepared for all of the follow-up questions. While experts recommend [talking to your child](#) by age 8, it's also important that each family continue these conversations throughout puberty as the changes continue to happen. If your child identifies with a gender identity different from their gender given at birth, these [resources](#) can help you better understand how to approach the conversation to ensure they are also aware of the changes that they will experience.



How Did We Get a COVID-19 Vaccine So Fast?

It takes an average of 10 years to [develop a vaccine](#). How did we get a [COVID-19 vaccine so fast](#)? Years of virus and vaccine research means a lot was already known. Then the urgency of the pandemic made it easier to get funding, scientists, and study volunteers. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines use new technology and are the only mRNA vaccines available for use. But scientists have been [researching them for over a decade](#). The Journal of the American Medical Association has a [video](#) explaining how the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines work. The newly FDA approved Johnson & Johnson vaccine also uses newer vaccine technology. That method is also used in other approved vaccines like the one for Ebola. This [video](#) explains the different types of vaccine technology and what is new with the COVID-19 vaccines.

News Sources for Kids

As kids get older, they become more aware of what is going on in the world around them. Whether it's from the internet, overhearing adult conversations or listening to the local news playing in the background at home, kids are learning about current events that can often be confusing or scary. One of the best steps you can take is to let your child know they can always talk to you about any news they hear that they have questions about or that concerns them. The next step you can take is to help your child learn more about the topic they have questions about by guiding them to (or exploring with them) [reputable children's news sources](#). Additional sources can be found [here](#). Lastly, you can help your child develop [media literacy](#) and [digital citizenship](#). Media literacy is a critical thinking skill that will allow your child to identify different types of media and understand the messages being shared. It will teach them how to evaluate the perspective, validity and bias of the news source. Becoming a good [digital citizen](#) can show your child how to be a safe, responsible and respectful user of technology.

Has your child's behavior changed?

Have you noticed any changes in your child's behavior or emotions since the pandemic started? If you have any concerns or questions, please call (313) 451-0720. This is a Google Voice phone number that will call our Henry Ford coordinator who can help to connect you with a behavioral therapist for children.

Are there other topics you are interested in and would like to learn more about?

If yes, please e-mail us at ParentConnection@hfhs.org or to unsubscribe.