

## **Breastfeeding and Homeschooling**

Most of us are already convinced on the physiological and emotional superiority of breastfeeding. Like homeschooling, it is more than just a better way of getting nourishment into a baby, but is an entirely different way of life. In fact, one of the reasons that homeschooling seemed so logical was because it was such a natural sequel to breastfeeding.

There are many analogies that can be drawn between breastfeeding and homeschooling. Some choose to breastfeed for the first few weeks only to get the benefits of colostrums, as some choose to stay home only during infancy to give baby the benefit of a healthier environment. Some choose to breastfeed for the entire first year for maximum nutritional benefit, as some choose to homeschool throughout the preschool and kindergarten years to give their child the best possible start in their education. Defying conventional practice, some breastfeed into toddler hood, as some delay formal schooling until age eight or later. Still others believe in "baby-led" weaning (somewhat of a misnomer, as it is ideally a mutual "decision" between mother and baby), just as some choose an informally structured homeschool approach, based on their child's abilities and interests.

When a baby is totally breastfed, he needs no supplements of any kind—not even water, unless the weather is extremely hot and dry—just as the young child who is truly homeschooled does not need formal "classes" at an early age. When solid foods are gradually introduced—like academic subjects are gradually added—then water *is* necessary, just as certain short drills (math, phonics) are needed to provide the tools of learning. Solid foods should be added carefully, one at a time, and discontinued if there seems to be an allergic reaction. Likewise, if the child doesn't seem to be ready for a given piece of "schoolwork" it should be dropped temporarily and tried again at a later time.

Are bottle supplements ever necessary? Some mothers say no, just as some homeschooling parents say it is never necessary to supplement their home training with a day or two at nursery school or play group, except possibly in rare emergencies.

Should the breastfed baby be weaned to a bottle or directly to a cup? Some homeschooled children eventually mainstream into church school or academy, while others are homeschooled through the high school years and go directly into college or an apprenticeship as a young adult. Each family and each student

must prayerfully decide for themselves, based on their own convictions, led by the Holy Spirit.

Dr. and Mrs. Moore stated in *Home Grown Kids*, page 66: "As much as possible, your baby's actual needs should be anticipated so that he doesn't need to cry for the attention he deserves." Well-known Spirit of Prophecy counsel includes the following statements: "Parents should seek to divert their minds into some other channel." "Instead of punishing them when they did wrong, I would hold out inducements to them to do right." "Whipping may be necessary when other resorts fail, yet [the mother] should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so." The sole purpose of corporal punishment is "to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control." (*Child Guidance*, page 248-250)

### **La Leche League International**

Box 4079, Schaumburg, IL 60168. To locate the name and phone number of a local LLL leader, call 800/LaLeche. *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* is available from LLLI.

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