

Support is just a phone call away

Tauranga mum Carlene Mackenzie says she wouldn't still be breastfeeding three month old Sofia if it wasn't for the support of lactation consultant Karen Palmer.



With the support of a lactation consultant, mum of three Carlene Mackenzie is planning to breastfeed baby Sofia for up to a year.

"The support I got from Karen was incredible. Just having someone on the end of the phone to call when I was having a bad day, to have someone encouraging you and believing in you," says Carlene.

New mums can call upon the support of

lactation consultants Karen Palmer or Raewyn Sherratt for issues such as pain with feeding, difficulties with latching on and positioning, slow growth, milk supply issues (too much or too little), ongoing mastitis, lack of confidence, to name a few.

"Sofia initially fed well but as she was

approaching six weeks I realised I needed more support. She wasn't latching on properly and so wasn't getting enough milk. I was worried she wasn't putting on enough weight," says Carlene.

Midwives provide the key professional support for breastfeeding from pregnancy through to six weeks after the baby is born. Midwives will visit mums in their home up to 10 times after the birth to help them get off to a good start. Sometimes the midwife may request the services of a lactation consultant as a fresh pair of eyes.

"For most mothers breastfeeding is something they have very little to do with until they become pregnant. Our role is to offer professional support to a clinical problem and help mothers find solutions. If necessary we refer onto further support in the community through mother-to-mother support groups," says Karen.

Based at Tauranga Hospital the lactation consultants visit mothers and babies on the ward or the special care baby unit (SCBU) who are experiencing problems with breastfeeding. They also run a weekly outpatients clinic for those with specific needs.

A similar service is soon to be offered in Whakatane and Karen says they are exploring other areas in the region where there is a strong need.

Tauranga mum Carlene Mackenzie on breastfeeding



Mum of three Carlene Mackenzie shares her thoughts on how to be successful with breastfeeding

"Before your baby is born, you have to start to visualise yourself as a breastfeeding mum."

"Skin to skin contact with your baby as soon as they are born is critical, so you need to think about breastfeeding and decide during pregnancy."

"The first few days after the baby is born you must take time out to bond with your baby and be strong to not allow too many visitors. Don't be afraid to ask people to come back the next day. Friends and family will understand."

"Breastfeeding is not just about providing food, it's about bonding and nurturing so if you're struggling, persevere and ask for help."

"Trust your instincts - mums and babies are wired to breastfeed. Sometimes you just need someone to encourage you and believe in you."



Why breastfeed?

Benefits for baby

- Breastmilk is easily digested and is free, always fresh and immediately available.
- Breastmilk provides a perfect blend of nutrients and immunity.
- Breastfeeding helps baby grow and develop.
- Breastmilk helps prevent a baby getting chest infections, meningitis, ear infections and urine infections.
- A breastfed baby isn't as likely to be obese or get diabetes.

Benefits for mum

- Breastfeeding helps mothers recover faster from birth.
- Skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby is a wonderful way to start bonding with your baby and a great boost to breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding reduces the risk of pre-menopausal breast cancer in mothers.
- Breastfeeding may reduce the risk of ovarian cancer, osteoporosis and hip fractures in mothers later in life.
- Breastfeeding uses lots of energy so can help mums to lose the weight gained through pregnancy.

More information

For more information on breastfeeding, including getting ready for when baby arrives, the different stages of breastfeeding and where to go for support, visit www.breastfeeding.org.nz.

