

Breastfeeding and bottle feeding

The experiences of mothers' of multiples



Sara Hotter

Our twins were born at 36 weeks 5 days, which is pretty good for twins. Zoe was 2.65kg and Olivia was 2.70kg, so I was lucky enough to not have to have my kids in SCBU. I was able to tandem feed my girls by the time I left hospital and, luckily, I had enough supply to breastfeed them both.

I remember feeling so tired in those days, not surprising when I look back at my girls *Well Child* books and see how much weight they gained! I remember asking Plunket which formula they would recommend to me (I had this dream of having my husband do the odd night feed so I could get more than 2 hours sleep at a time! Ha!) and I had a very shirty reply that they "could not recommend a formula and babies should be given breast milk" (I remember thinking "Blah blah blah, thanks for nothing").

Anyway, I breastfed my twins until they were about 18 months old, then weaned them. I would have loved to have been able to make an educated choice on formula—not because I wanted to give up breastfeeding, but because I worried that if something happened to my milk, what was I going to feed them with! Zoe and Olivia are now 2 and have the odd drink of cow's milk, but are not really interested.

Jenni Rutter

My fraternal boys were born in the UK and the hospital fed them formula the night they were born, as they said their blood sugar was too low. From that time on, I did my best to breastfeed but topped them up with the some formula, which was *SMA*, the Wyeth product known here as *S26*.

We moved home to NZ when the boys were 3 months old and swapped to *S26 Gold*. This worked well for Toby. It didn't suit Josh though, who became colicky and unhappy, and was tentatively diagnosed with silent reflux. We swapped to *Karicare HA (Hypo Allergenic)* which was harder to

find, but suited him better. I did worry about the vivid green poos he produced while on this formula but I have since heard others report the same, so perhaps it is a known but unreported side effect! I am now using *S26 Gold* for my third baby as well, and it suits him just fine.

Tracy Morris

Before our triplets were born, I had decided I would not breastfeed but I wanted to express at the start, as I had done for my first daughter. Breastfeeding did not go too well with her. After struggling at the hospital to do it and then at home for a day or two, I just wanted to rip my boobs off! I could not stand the feeling any longer, due to being too tired, I guess. I expressed for 6 weeks for my first daughter and, as it turned out, I did the same for the triplets.

The triplets were born at 32½ weeks and were in SCBU for three weeks, during which time I expressed breast milk and topped-up with the liquid formula supplied by the hospital. I had just caught up with being able to feed them totally on breast milk, when it was time for them to come home. My husband was home for the first three weeks when they came home, which meant I was able to keep expressing, but not to the same extent as I was while they were in SCBU. I would express every three hours during the day and at night we would feed a baby each with formula (we used *Heinz Nurture Gold* as this was the one we got supplied free of charge thanks to Heinz, through the Triplet Plus Club), and then Clint would feed the third one, and I would express.... A bit like feeding quads, really. When Clint went back to work, I was on my own at night feeding all three, so we knew it would be too hard to express as well. So, after the first 6 weeks they were totally formula fed. Abby and Brooke were okay on the formula, but Cade got a bit constipated on it. I do remember using *Infacol* for a couple of months.

We went through the Nurture range until, at about 2 years 3 months I was throwing away more of the bottle than what they were drinking. I tried them on cow's milk when I ran out of a can over the last few months of using the formula but only Brooke would drink it, and not every time. I do give them the flavoured milks now, which they all love.

One of the nurses in SCBU got me trying to breastfeed them while they were in there, even after I said I wasn't going to, and I gave it a go. Cade would have taken to it like a duck to water after a bit of practice I think, but Brooke, the smallest of the three, was looking like she was going to be like my first daughter and I didn't want to just breastfeed one or two of them. It just didn't seem

fair to me. It would also mean I would have to survive on even less sleep than what I did, as by the time I had finished feeding the last one, it was just about time to start all over again. Formula feeding meant I could feed them at night, and someone could take over in the morning if I needed to have a sleep.

Ellie Chapman

Our twins were born prematurely and spent the first few weeks in the SCBU of the hospital. During this time, I expressed regularly and later started to breastfeed. At first, I wasn't quite making enough milk to keep both of the twins satisfied, so their expressed milk was topped up by liquid formula by the hospital and this seemed to work really well.

I continued to express for the first ten months, topping-up feeds with formula. We gravitated towards *Karicare Gold*—probably more so because the name implied to me that it was something special. I will never forget running out late one night, however, and having to do a mad dash to the supermarket only to find that our now trusted brand had sold out! I spent 20 minutes looking at all of the containers, and then picked up a can of S26. Unfortunately this formula didn't work as well for us, and after three days of very upset stomachs, we abandoned the rest of the tin and have continued to work our way through the *Karicare Gold* range.

Jo Harland

I stopped breastfeeding my twins when they were 18 months old. I had not consciously planned to continue breastfeeding that long but it just worked out well for all of us that way. I was probably significantly influenced by the fact that our daughter turned her nose up at a bottle when she was 3 months old, and no matter how many different types of bottles or teats we tried, she just wasn't interested—it was so much easier just to continue with the breastfeeding, than trying to get fluids into her any other way!

When they were weaned at 18 months, our son started having formula and our daughter didn't have anything other than water (she had quite a bit of yoghurt and cheese forced on her though!). We didn't put too much effort into figuring out which formula we should use, we just brought a few different single-serve sachets and, given that my son didn't seem to mind what he drank, we just ended up buying *Karicare Toddler* formula, for no particular reason. We also didn't give too much thought to milk versus formula; we knew we could just put him straight onto cow's milk but, for some reason, we seemed to feel that formula would be more beneficial. He has always been smaller than his sister, doesn't eat as much etc., and our Plunket nurse also recommended keeping him on formula through the winter months.

We stayed with formula until he was almost two and half and then swapped to *Junior Milk*; again no particular reason for going with that rather than Blue Milk, but just that psychological thing that it must be better because it says it has more vitamins, iron etc. Sucked in by marketing probably! Through this time, we kept offering our daughter milk in a 'big-girls cup' and eventually she started drinking milk occasionally, as well.

Writing about this, now (the twins are nearly 3), it's interesting to realise what you do without making a conscious decision about it. You just do what you think is right for your kids at the time, and you don't really have the time to analyse or research it too much...you just go with your gut feeling, and if it's not working, you change it!

Nic Hayden (mother of a singleton)

When Taylor was born I found it very hard to breastfeed. My milk was clearly in short supply and expressing would only bring, maybe, 10ml. After 2 days of trying and me freaking Taylor wasn't getting enough, I asked for some formula to try. As I have many, many allergies/intolerances, the hospital decided it was safer to put him on *Neocate* while he was in the hospital and to give him a few days to get settled after such a traumatic birth.

On advice from the paediatrician, when we left the hospital we tried a hypoallergenic formula and Taylor ended up with a rash on his face, terrible bum explosions and was really unsettled. At times, he was screaming in pain. We then tried other hypoallergenic formulas and, unfortunately, experienced the same thing. We were then given a tin of *Neocate* to try again and it was like I had my baby back!

Sadly this ran out and we went back to trying other formulas. None of these worked and some made him worse. We finally got in to see the paediatrician a few times and were advised, at first, to keep going and see what happens over the next few weeks... it got worse and worse. Finally, after another appointment where I had a HUGE talk with the paediatrician, she agreed to give him a trial of *Pepti Jnr* for 4 weeks. This settled him a little, but not as successfully as where he was on the *Neocate*.

After another 8 weeks we were able to get the paediatrician to agree to the *Neocate*. Taylor now feeds every 4 hours and it means that I don't have to stress about how much he's getting, what I'm eating (if breastfeeding I would have to be VERY strict due to allergies/intolerances and dairy) and it means that others can feed him too, which enables my husband to get up to him one night a week to give me a break.

I was all for breastfeeding him, and having very low supply gutted me, but he is a very healthy happy baby on the right formula.