



Sitara Hewitt: Actress

Sitara Hewitt grew up in the small Canadian town of Elora, Ontario with her three older sisters and her Pakistani mother and Welsh father. Her parents are both academics whose research led them all over the world, most frequently into the Himalayan mountains of northern Pakistan and Sitara considers herself privileged to have been able to accompany them on their travels. She studied dance professionally, training in ballet, jazz, and hip-hop for 16 years, before moving to Toronto. After playing a dancer in *Bollywood, Hollywood*, Sitara began to study acting in earnest and played a number of smaller roles before her part as Rayyan Hamoudi brought her international attention. Today, Sitara divides her time between Toronto and Los Angeles and enjoys fitness, her family and a healthy, holistic lifestyle.

- adapted from Sitara's official website:
www.sitarahewitt.com

Sitara Hewitt Stars As Breastfeeding Mom!

Canadian actress Sitara Hewitt plays a small town family physician, Rayyan Hamoudi, on the hit television sit-com, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Sitara and the character she plays are different in many ways, but they do share qualities such as strength and determination and a commitment to health.

Though she is pleased with the opportunity to star in a successful television show, Sitara is playing another role right now that brings her even more satisfaction than her on-screen portrayal of Dr. Hamoudi. She is enjoying a few months away from filming to be a full-time mom to her three-month-old son, Rowan. One of her favourite parts of this real life role is breastfeeding.

"I decided I would breast feed before I was pregnant," says Sitara. "My mother was one of the main reasons that I made this decision. She breastfed all of us and is a believer in the benefits of breastfeeding. Also, seeing my sister with my niece and nephew made it current for me -- I could tell it was a good thing."

Sitara was also impressed by the science of breastfeeding. "I read about the health benefits for baby: improved digestion and less frequent illness, plus the emotional

bonding that occurs. The benefits for mom sounded good too: the uterus shrinks quickly after birth due to the release of oxytocin -- the "feel good" hormone. The bottom line is that I figure our bodies are pretty smart."

Sitara thought breastfeeding was miraculous right away. Then, she experienced sore nipples and developed mastitis during a busy travel time when Rowan was very small. Her visions of effortlessly feeding her baby were shattered. With the support of her husband, mother, sister and a close friend, Sitara learned how to overcome these early challenges.

"The best piece of advice came from my sister Nina," Sitara recalls. "Nina told me that you have to teach them how to latch from day one. Babies can copy you right away, so she told me to open my mouth wide and say "Aaah" and, when my baby imitated me to move him onto the breast. Though his mouth was so tiny at first, I remember the midwives saying he had a good latch within a couple of days. I still say "Big Aaaahs" to remind him and he opens his mouth really wide! It's adorable."



Sitara's breastfeeding tips:

- ☞ **Ask for help** from your friends and relatives.
- ☞ Take lots of **naps!**
- ☞ **Eat** a good amount of nutritious, hearty foods – don't diet!
- ☞ If you're going to be pumping, **try different pumps**. I found a manual pump more effective and economical than an electric pump.
- ☞ I found a lanolin based **nipple cream** helpful for healing sore nipples.
- ☞ Don't get discouraged or think there is something wrong with you if you have challenges. Breastfeeding is a skill that needs to be learned by you and your baby so **be patient**.
- ☞ **Feel proud** of yourself for making the choice to breastfeed!

~ S.H.

Sitara also found the support of her midwife, from the Ontario Midwives Association, very helpful during pregnancy, birth and after Rowan was born. She used La Leche League on-line resources and other breastfeeding websites to find information about topics such as mastitis management.

Sitara was determined to make sure that both she and her

breastfeeding as a wonderful experience that has become one of her favourite parts of the day.

"Pregnancy, labour and breastfeeding are the accomplishments I am most proud of in my life," Sitara asserts.

She adds, "Emotionally and physically, breastfeeding seems like a natural transition from the womb. I feel it makes life less shocking or stressful for a baby. Any overwhelming or hectic situations Rowan has been in (flights, doctors visits, crowds) he is instantly soothed by nursing. I don't know how we'd have travelled for work and family without it. It helps him adjust and be comforted in different environments."

"I like how simple and easy it is," Sitara reflects. "Quiet middle of the night feeds lying down, while catching up with my husband on the couch, in the backseat of the car with the sunshades up if we're away from home too long. No preparation required!"

She concludes, "The bonus is seeing him nestled up to me, contentedly gulping away with a look of serene happiness in his eyes. It's more than a meal, it's a special moment for both of us. At least once a day I try to lie down with him and nurse. Sometimes I meditate and let the stress and tiredness melt away; other times I just stroke his soft hair and acknowledge how blessed I am to have him."



Sitara, shown here relaxing at home with son, Rowan, offers these encouraging words to all new moms, **"Give yourself credit. You are brilliant, strong and yours are the special treasures of bringing new life into this world."**

baby were able to enjoy the good health that breastfeeding supports and so she persevered through the early challenges.

"The fact that my baby is getting the good nourishment and health benefits was a huge motivator. It always seemed like a natural choice," she says. Returning to her pre-pregnancy weight was an unexpected bonus for the young actress, who needs to maintain a consistent appearance for her television role.

Over the past few months, Sitara has gained confidence as a mother. She describes



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Karen Kerkhoff Gromada, MSN, RN, IBCLC
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