



La Leche League Canada

Lynnelle's Story

Here's a photo of my beautiful little girl, Niyah. Isn't she lovely and healthy looking? Hard to believe that just one year ago, she was in an Edmonton Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, isn't it? Niyah's doctors and nurses told me that the breast milk I pumped for her and the skin-to-skin care we practiced helped her to make her way home.

I was determined to breastfeed Niyah in spite of all the obstacles that we faced. The person who helped me most to meet those obstacles was Nancy, a volunteer La Leche League Canada Leader.

If it weren't for La Leche League, I would probably not be breastfeeding Niyah today.



After years of trying and several miscarriages, my husband and I were overjoyed to be expecting again. But our joy was clouded by worry when I was diagnosed with colistasis of pregnancy at 33 weeks. After delivery by c-section at 36 weeks, Niyah was immediately placed on life support.

For the next week, I dedicated my days and nights to pumping breast milk for Niyah to receive through a feeding tube. I spent hours holding her tiny body, with all the tubes and wires, skin-to-skin on my chest. In spite of my overwhelming fatigue and pain, I was determined that she would have the best I could give her.

After a week, Niyah was able to come to the breast to feed instead of being fed through a tube. Not surprisingly, given all the complications, she had a hard time latching. Her weight gain was slow and a lactation consultant recommended domperidone and frequent pumping. This advice seemed to help but I was still worried and afraid.

A supportive friend suggested that I call one of the volunteers at La Leche League. That was a very important phone call because that's how I discovered Nancy. ***Nancy's calm, supportive presence was the one thing that helped me to stay on course and keep doing what Niyah needed most to recover.*** I stored her warm and personal e-mail messages on my phone for inspiration during the bleak 2:00 a.m. feedings as I struggled to get little Niyah to latch to my breast.

Even after she was released, Niyah continued to grow slowly and have some trouble latching. But Nancy helped me to understand that Niyah's unique style of breastfeeding and her unique growth pattern were working just fine for her.

That's what I love best about the help I receive from La Leche League. It is uniquely tailored to me. Every woman, every baby and every breastfeeding relationship is different. Sometimes things don't go 'by the book'. ***At La Leche League, my baby and I were treated as individuals – not as a case to be solved.*** No one told me what to do. Instead, the volunteers provided me with information and support. I was empowered to take responsibility for my own decisions.

Niyah turned one in September and, as you can see, she's thriving. I'm feeling healthy, strong and proud of what we've accomplished. I'm so grateful for the help that I received from Nancy and from La Leche League Canada that I'm in training to become a La Leche League Canada volunteer. I want to make sure that the wonderful, personalized help I received when I needed it will be available to other moms and babies.

*~ Lynnelle Steman
September 2010*