



La Leche League Canada

Because breastfeeding isn't always easy, we're here to help

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For years, Canadian women have been hearing messages about the importance of breastfeeding for their own health and the health of their babies. Most Canadian women believe that breastfeeding is important and most start out breastfeeding their infants. But many women are not prepared for the challenges that they sometimes encounter and many mothers give up breastfeeding earlier than they had planned.

Even though Health Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Society and the World Health Organization all recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, fewer than half of Canadian babies are still breastfeeding by that age.

What goes wrong?

Sitara Hewitt, a Canadian actor and star of the hit show *Little Mosque on the Prairie* knows. "For some moms and babies, breastfeeding is easy. For others, it can be difficult, frustrating and even painful," she says. Hewitt's been through some of those challenges herself with her son, and that experience prompted her to share her message in a public service announcement, currently airing on La Leche League Canada's website, and being shared through Facebook, YouTube and other internet sites.



The message: La Leche League's trained volunteers are ready to help mothers with information and practical tips to deal with some of the difficulties they may encounter.

Jodi Flanagan is one mom who benefited from that help. "I thought it was going to be simple. You put the baby to the breast and away it went. But that's not actually what happened. It took a lot of work and a lot of trial and error," she says.

Flanagan's story is told in more detail in *Breastfeeding Mothers*, a short film released this month by La Leche League Canada to expand on the messages of the public service announcement. The 11-minute film features interviews with 14 Canadian mothers about their lived experiences of breastfeeding. Their words are touching, heartfelt and, sometimes, a little shocking. They tell it like it is.

The women in *Breastfeeding Mothers* put a real face to the statistics. Breastfeeding can be hard, they say, and many of them were not prepared for the tears, the frustrations and the disappointment.

But the film is not merely an expose of breastfeeding's challenges: these are mothers who found help, support and solutions, and went on to enjoy positive breastfeeding experiences. The film's ultimate message is one of hope.

Often, it's LLLC's volunteers who are the source of that hope, says LLLC Board Chair Fiona Audy.

“Many mothers give up breastfeeding before they intended because of a lack of good information and practical support.” she says. “We hope that this film and the public service announcement will help more Canadian families connect with the breastfeeding support and information they need.”

La Leche League Canada has more than 400 trained volunteers who provide breastfeeding help by telephone, in-person and on-line. The mother-to-mother support these volunteers give has been shown to increase breastfeeding duration and satisfaction. However, many women don't realize that the help they need can be as close as their telephone or computer. By going to www.LLCC.ca, they can find volunteers in their communities, or submit questions by email.

The film, produced and shot by Allan Wylie and Shadow Pictures Media of Mississauga, features interviews with breastfeeding mothers from the Toronto area and will be screened in many Canadian communities this year.

La Leche League Canada received financial support for the awareness campaign from individual donors, the Calgary Breastfeeding Matters Foundation, Bravado! Designs Inc., Oakville Galleries and from the Alberta Department of Health and Wellness, the Newfoundland Department of Health and Community Services, the Yukon Territory Department of Health and Social Services and the New Brunswick Department of Health.

For more information, and to view the both the film and the public service announcement featuring Sitara Hewit, visit www.llc.ca/national-awareness-campaign

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