

Finn's Story

I was unexpectedly born five weeks early. The four weeks prior had been difficult for my mother who spent the best part of that time in hospital with bleeding and clots as part of our placenta was lifting away. The doctors gave her steroids on three different occasions to try and mature my lungs but I still found breathing difficult when I was born.

My weight was 2600 grams; my length was 45 cms and my head circumference was 33.5 cms. My Apgars were 8 and then 2 as I struggled to get the breathing right. It was much better when they gave me half strength oxygen. It was sad that my mother didn't get to cuddle me straight away. All she was allowed was a quick kiss on my forehead just before the midwife hurried with me to the NICU.

However my substitute mothers took good care of me there and my parents and older brother and grandparents came often to visit me and it was nice to feel the warmth of their hands on my back and to be able to grasp a finger. My mother was an especially frequent visitor, as she tried to make the trip down the several floors from the maternity ward to the neonatal ward for most of my feeds. It was really comforting to hear her familiar voice. It really helped, also, that she tore up the maternity top she was wearing when her labour began and left a section of it with me next to my face so that the smell of her helped me to stay settled when she was away from me.



I was in the NICU for three days and during that time my mother was able to provide all the colostrum that I needed (I was tube-fed) and no formula was given to me. I didn't get any vitamin K. Instead my mother was given two doses of *Arnica 30C* then she was put on *Nux vomica 6C* to have each evening (with succussions).

Apparently it was prescribed to help my mother's system cope with all the medication that she needed after the Caesarean section and because it's a good medicine to help with breathing difficulties in the newborn and jaundice of the newborn.

It was thought that we'd both get the benefit of the medicines as they'd come to me via my mother's milk and they must have worked well as my jaundice never reached dangerous levels and peaked by day five. Because I was breathing OK, by day three, I was moved to Special Care from the NICU; and, since my mother's milk had begun to come in, I was then allowed to go to the breast every second feed!



Apparently it was a BIG struggle for my mother to express enough colostrum for me just before her milk came in. She got quite worked up about it as some midwives just wouldn't help her to express. They had the attitude that expressing a few drops was good enough and, failing that, there was formula available for me. But my mother didn't want me to have any formula to upset my gut and knew that she could consistently get a few mls with regular expressing. She just needed practical support, and felt very frustrated as it seemed as if some of the nurses available on that shift didn't want to help.

She had a good cry and my grandmother helped to get her through that rough patch by rubbing her upper back and shoulders and showing her how to get more milk out of her breasts with massage and breast compressions during pumping. She was also given some Bach flowers. They included: *Star of Bethlehem*; *Hornbeam*; *Vervain*; *Larch* and *Walnut*.

By day five after my birth, because my bilirubin levels were dropping, they allowed me to leave Special Care and go to my mother's room. It was really good then to get lots of cuddles from both my parents and grandparents and to be able to go to the breast at every feed.



I was doing so well they allowed us to go home *together* on day six! However it was very tiring for my mother when we got home as I needed feeding often and my brother who is just a bit over two years older than me was also, understandably, demanding a lot of her attention. Her exhaustion improved lots after a dose of *Sepia 200C*.

I've been a "good, settled" baby with no colic and that's due to my mother taking very good care of her diet and making sure that she gets plenty of protein and good fats and lots of complex carbohydrates at the expense of simple carbohydrates. That has meant that the milk travels slowly through my system and the lactose load in her milk is at a manageable level. Additionally she's helped me to improve the number of lactase enzymes in my gut (which I was lacking due to my prematurity), by taking a zinc supplement.

It took a few weeks for my jaundice to completely settle but the paediatrician wasn't worried about it and my mother kept me near the window to get plenty of light onto my skin.

Apparently the true milk comes in at week three following the birth. Up until that time we babies get all the benefits of colostrum and then transitional milk which is still quite colostrum in all aspects and, therefore, very protective. The protein level in mature milk is a lot lower than colostrum and it is high in lactose. So, it was after this time that I got oral thrush and apparently it wasn't unexpected due to the fact that my system wasn't so well oxygenated at birth.

I had some white patches on my gums and my mother had a very sore breast with shooting pain going deep into the breast from the nipple. I also had a hoarse cry and was a bit edgy with noise; easy to startle.

My mother was given *Borax* 30C for a few days and all settled well for both of us.

I doubled my birth weight by week ten, and have continued to grow nicely at my mother's breast.

