# Empowering Education and Support for Breastfeeding Women Living in Rural Communities

For breastfeeding people living in rural areas, it is often difficult to find appropriate breastfeeding and lactation resources as they can be few and far between. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), infants in rural areas are less likely to ever breastfeed than infants living in urban areas.

Emma, a new mother to a baby boy, lives in a rural area where the nearest town with a healthcare facility is over an hour away. Even by phone, it was difficult to reach her provider's office. She was determined to provide the best for her son, including breastfeeding; however, she was concerned about managing her post-partum anxiety and depression. She wasn't sure where to find out if her medications were something she could take while breastfeeding – which made her more anxious! Emma faced some common challenges living in a rural area:

- Travel Barriers – Emma struggled with general breastfeeding and medications concerns, all while managing the demands of a newborn; traveling long distances for an appointment was not only exhausting, but also not ideal.
- Limited Local Support – Emma's town had no specialized breastfeeding support services. The nearest support group was a two-hour drive away, making it difficult for Emma to access help when she needed it most.
- Limited Resources – Finding reliable information about breastfeeding was another challenge. Emma felt isolated and unsure where to turn for accurate information.

One day, while searching for answers online and discovering mixed information about the medications she wanted to start, Emma discovered MotherToBaby. Intrigued by our expert support that was available remotely and promptly, she explored our fact sheets, blogs, and podcasts that cover a range of breastfeeding topics. After reviewing our website, she was delighted to see our live chat service!

During our conversation, we addressed Emma's concerns about breastfeeding while on her medications to treat her post-partum anxiety and depression. We were also able to discuss the recommendations for vaccines while breastfeeding (like the updated COVID-19 and influenza vaccines. We also answered her questions about cold

medications, referring her to our specialized blog. She was very relieved to connect with someone so quickly and receive accurate information on the spot.

The flexibility of MotherToBaby's online services was also a game-changer for Emma. She was now able to access information at times that suited her schedule, as she also could use our text, email, or phone service. This was particularly important for Emma, since her days were unpredictable and often included late-night feedings and other unexpected moments!

MotherToBaby referred Emma to online lactation resources and support groups. Engaging with other breastfeeding parents and experts on an online platform can provide her with emotional support and encouragement. Sharing experiences and hearing from others who faced similar challenges can also help Emma feel less alone and more empowered in her breastfeeding journey. Engaging with the online community and support can provide Emma with a sense of connection and support that was missing in her rural area, which can help her more easily navigate the ups and downs of breastfeeding.

Mental health support was also very important to Emma because she lacked this in her daily life. Resources like Post-Partum Support International (PSI) and the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline are now tools Emma has to support her along the way.

With evidence-based information about her medications and referrals to the appropriate resources, Emma felt much more reassured about treating her anxiety and depression while breastfeeding. She felt more knowledgeable and prepared to continue taking care of herself and her newborn. The convenience of online support and education alleviated much of the stress she had been feeling. She could now focus more on bonding with her baby, knowing she can turn to MotherToBaby should she have more questions or concerns about medications or exposures while breastfeeding.

References:

https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/maternal-health/2/breastfeeding

https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/facts.html

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org**.

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). Copyright by OTIS, August 30, 2024.