

Breasts – baby–feeders or sexual objects?

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By maria miller

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Breasts in North America are a taboo: going topless on beaches is not generally accepted, breastfeeding in public is often frowned on or seen as 'indecent exposure', women going topfree is considered shameful and immodest behavior.

On the other hand, entertainment industry and the media constantly show women wearing very scant clothing that barely covers the nipples and just draws more attention to the breasts. Fashion swimwear covers less and less of the female body each year. Media and advertisements signal to people that breasts are sexual, and only beautiful when big and protruding. But we know big breasts is a fallacy since women in ads and movies use push–up bras and breast enlargement to artificially 'enhance' the way their breasts look like.

Just think what young girls learn about breasts if they continually see this 'propaganda' without a balancing view of the real purpose of breasts! Breasts are to be hidden, they are sexual, forbidden. Parents teach their children the same way, and many times children don't see a single pair of naturally nude breasts apart from their own (if they are girls) while growing up. It is totally possible that a child grows up in North America and never sees a baby breastfeeding!

How many pairs of real breasts have you ever seen? For many young women, most of their knowledge about breasts comes from movies and magazines, so it is no wonder that even teenagers talk about getting breast implants, and that most American women seem to be unhappy with their breasts.

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If women are obsessed about their breast size and shape to the extent of surgery, men aren't doing any better. For many men female breasts are a source of sexual inspiration, fascination and fantasy. They get inspired from looking at pictures where they see some cleavage, where breasts are enticingly almost visible, yet hidden. The pornographic industry gets much good about the taboo–ism of female breasts by letting men see these taboo items for good money.

It is not so in Europe or in many other parts of the world. European women commonly go topless on beaches, and many European

countries also have nudist beaches where people sunbath naked, yet the atmosphere is decent and non–sexual and people are at ease. The sauna culture in some European countries makes people used to seeing nakedness, and they don't view breasts as any special thing or taboo. Primitive tribes in hot climates wear very little clothing and it's no big deal to them. It seems that North American culture is almost alone erotizing the breasts to such an extreme.

Carolyn Latteier, the author of *Breasts, The Women's Perspective on an American Obsession*, said in a TV program "All about breasts, "In many cultures, breasts aren't sexual at all. I interviewed a young anthropologist working with women in Mali, in a country in Africa where women go around with bare breasts. They're always feeding their babies. And when she told them that in our culture men are fascinated with breasts there was an instant of shock. The women burst out laughing. They laughed so hard, they fell on the floor. They said, "You mean, men act like babies?"

She also said in the same program that of the women she interviewed, the ones that were happiest with their breasts were breastfeeding women. They weren't thinking about, "Is it too small? Is it too big?" They were doing something wonderful – that which is the REAL purpose of breasts. [1]

Breastfeeding in USA

An infant formula industry study found that only 31 percent of US infants are still being breastfed at 6 months, and even though experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, one study found that only 13% of breastfeeding mothers at 3 months and a MERE 1% at 6 months were doing so. [2]

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Why do women fail to breastfeed or wean too early? There are many reasons. Some mothers think breastfeeding is 'yucky'. The husband or partner might think woman's breasts are for sexual purposes and become jealous over the nursing mom's breasts, or start thinking that the baby is doing something indecent and pervert when it feeds.

The numerous women who have negative experiences about breastfeeding pass them on to their friends. Doctors know very little about breastfeeding and about the dangers of bottlefeeding. Actually, a study found that the majority of pediatricians believe breastfeeding and formula–feeding are equally acceptable methods for feeding infants. [3]

Some women have problems in breastfeeding but don't receive

enough support and help to overcome the difficulties. Many have difficulties with breastfeeding in public because of other people's attitudes towards exposing their breasts. With some, going to work prevents them from breastfeeding and/or pumping breast milk.

One major factor undermining breastfeeding in US is the way infant formula companies advertise their products. They send free samples to pregnant mothers and to hospitals, give free gifts to doctors and nurses, and leave the impression in their pamphlets that formula is almost as good as breast milk. No wonder the 'supplemental bottle' is often used when there is just a minor solvable problem with breastfeeding!

Another reason why babies are weaned early is because people have misconceptions about weaning. Most people in Northern America and in other western countries think that breastfeeding is only for the first couple of months of an infant's life, or mostly up to year. However, in most other cultures worldwide children wean much later, and in most of the history children weaned much later. According to Katherine Dettwyler's studies, comparing humans to our closest animal relatives shows that the natural age of weaning in humans should be between 2.3 and 7 years. Children who are allowed to wean themselves, usually do so between 2 and 5 years of age. [4]

It seems that everybody agrees that breast milk is better, but that the whole society is negative about breastfeeding? Why is that? In the course of history many different parts of the

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female body have been fetishes for men, for example ankles, necks, and tiny feet (in China), so why are North Americans so obsessed with breasts as sexual objects in our age?

In my opinion the reason is because the whole society is about to forget what is the real purpose of female breasts. That is shown for example in Katherine Dettwyler's experience in her 'Women and Culture' course in the fall of 1993. One of her undergraduate students was totally flabbergasted to discover that the biological function of women's breasts was for feeding children. With obvious shock and disgust evident in her voice she asked, 'You mean women's breasts are like a cow's udder?' [5] If you can see breasts as 'wonderful milk–making machines' meant for babies, then you won't worry anymore what men think of your breasts or what they look like!

We have a vicious cycle on our hands: the less women breastfeed, the less people get to see the real purpose of breasts. At the same time media everywhere constantly touts the perverted view of female breasts, which makes people view breasts as sexual. That

in turn makes it harder for women to breastfeed, since many of the reasons for not breastfeeding are linked to the erroneous idea that woman's breasts are sexual organs.

So the less women breastfeed, the harder it becomes for women to breastfeed. This cycle self–promotes the view that female breasts are sexual and that women are mere sex objects, which can lead to more pornography, sexual crime and abuse of women – all the while little children are robbed of their best nutrition.

The cure?

Women, breastfeed your babies! Men, understand the real function of female breasts! Everybody, forget about breasts being sexual!

References [1] Carolyn Latteier in the TV program
"All about breasts" Transcript available at
<http://www.newshe.com/allaboutbreasts1.shtml>

[2] Breastfeeding trends through 2000 Ross Products Division
<http://www.ross.com/aboutRoss/Survey.pdf>

[3] Pediatricians' Practices and Attitudes Regarding

Breastfeeding Promotion PEDIATRICS Vol. 103 No. 3 March 1999, p.
e35 <http://www.pediatrics.org/>

[4] A Natural Age of weaning, Katherine Dettwyler
<http://www.prairienet.org/laleche/detwean.html>

[5] Katherine Dettwyler as quoted in Breastfeeding at Municipal
Pools in Canada [http://mediaworkswest.com/BACE/BMPC/BMPC–
Part8.htm](http://mediaworkswest.com/BACE/BMPC/BMPC–Part8.htm)

The author is a breastfeeding mother with a website 007 Breasts at <http://www.007b.com/> discussing how media and society have influenced us to see female breasts as taboos and sexual objects and how this relates to breastfeeding. Other topics are why women fail to breastfeed, wonders of breastmilk and breastfeeding, bras and breast health, breastfeeding pictures, normal breasts gallery, topfreedom.

Give Them Baby Toys, Babies Are Born To Play

By Terry Ross

A baby is born to play. A baby will respond right from birth to brightly coloured toys, bright moving objects and sounds. Introducing baby toys to the nursery right from day one will help to stimulate your newborn baby and enable him to develop more quickly.

Like children, babies learn fast, they rapidly develop new skills through listening, watching and touching. Toys stimulate a baby's desire to learn, help them learn quickly through new experiences, help them develop an imagination and recognise different sounds.

In the first few months your baby will develop his basic senses of sight, sound and touch. Choose baby toys that will provide a range of experiences including colour, shape and texture. Have a brightly coloured mobile in the nursery where your baby can see it and study it while lying in his crib / cot.

Very quickly your baby will be able to grab things and will be looking for a whole range of new touching experiences. Go for learning toys, baby toys that will inspire your baby's imagination, toys that will enable your baby to associate touch with sound and shape.

Babies just love to explore and it won't be very long before they are able to move towards objects that interest them. You can use interesting toys to grab your baby's attention, use baby toys to encourage your baby to learn to roll, learn to crawl and eventually learn to walk.

Baby toys can keep your little one occupied for hours toys generate interest, make your baby think and will help them to learn once they come of school age. You quite often hear people moaning about how lack of stimulation has meant that they no longer learn as quickly. The same goes for your baby, if your baby lacks stimulation at an early age they will develop more slowly and maybe never catch up. Baby toys will help them learn and develop all the skills they need.

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Are you fed up with all those endless hours of crying? If you are, baby toys can help you out. Stimulate your baby using baby toys and other new learning experiences during the day, encourage your baby to use his mind and take an interest on everything that is going on around him and the odds are that your baby will sleep better at night.

In these modern times there is a baby toy for nearly every learning experience. Baby toys have been developed to help your baby learn. Take full advantage of those that have gone before you and learned what your baby will like most and let your baby enjoy trying to understand their new world through the magic of baby toys.

For more on babies and

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