

HONORABLE MENTION Crying

By Adena Cohen-Bearak

My 6-week-old baby was crying all the time. My ears were ringing from the sound. At night, my husband, Arnie, would hold Jordan while I took a hot bath and tried to relax. I would close the bathroom door to crying, and when I opened it, I would hear the crying once again. The baby was inconsolable.

I had two conflicting thoughts: it didn't feel right in my gut that my baby was crying this much, but everyone told me it was normal for new babies to cry a lot. My brain murky with sleep deprivation, I embraced the latter explanation, and started hardening myself to his crying. It was all I could do to keep sane.

One warm night, Jordan was crying and crying. Arnie tried rocking him, carrying him in the baby sling around the house, laying him on his

chest. Jordan continued to cry. Finally, Arnie went into the kitchen and started to boil water in a pan.

"What are you doing?" I asked, following him into the kitchen.

The nurse placed Jordan on the baby scale, and there was the truth glaring us in the face.

"I'm going to give him a bottle of formula. I think he's hungry." Arnie measured the formula and poured the hot water from the pan into the bottle.

"Don't give him formula! I'm breastfeeding him!"

"But I think he's hungry!"

"You're trying to undermine me!" I was crying and shaking. I remembered what the breastfeeding teachers had said: Once you started

using formula, the baby would soon be weaned from the breast. "He should be getting enough from me! It's supposed to work perfectly! Don't give him a bottle!"

"OK, OK, if you think you know what you're doing," he relented. "But I still think he's hungry."

Arnie put the bottle into the refrigerator. We didn't talk about that night again. Jordan continued to cry.

Soon after, we took Jordan for his two-month pediatrician's appointment. My heart was pounding as we walked down the narrow corridor towards the pediatrician's office.

The nurse placed Jordan on the baby scale, and there was the truth glaring us in the face: Jordan had gained just a few ounces in a month's time. Something was very wrong.

"OK, what we have here is a hungry little guy," said the pediatrician. She started to feed him a bottle of premixed formula. Jordan's eyes

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grew very large and he drank the formula in minutes. "We don't see this very often except in third world countries, but your breast milk must not have enough calories in it. He needs more calories than your milk contains to gain weight."

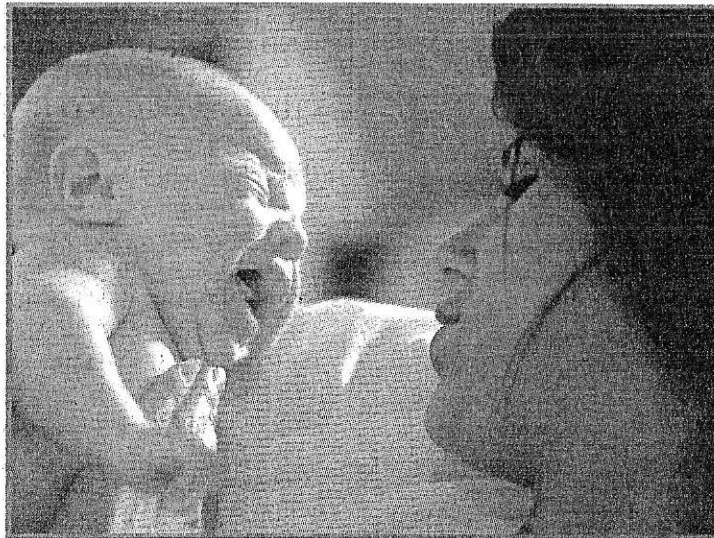
The pediatrician spoke matter-of-factly, but my eyes filled with tears. I was humiliated to be crying in front of the pediatrician, but the realization that Jordan had been crying from hunger – that I had essentially been starving my baby – was horrifying.

"This is what I want you to do," said the pediatrician. "For the next week, give him as much formula as he wants. Pump instead of nursing him."

"Don't breastfeed?" I asked incredulously.

"Just for this week. We need to make sure he doesn't have a problem absorbing nutrients from the milk. Once we are certain that the problem isn't with him, you can go back to breastfeeding followed by formula, to make sure he gets enough calories."

I was surprised, but I wasn't about to go



against her advice.

The nurse gave us tons of formula samples, little jars with nipples, packages, cans. We loaded everything into the stroller, and left the pediatricians' office. I was trying very hard not to start crying again. Arnie helped me load everything into the car and gave me a hug. He was going to work, and I was going home to deal with this.

"You have to be strong for Jordan," he said. I drove home slowly, tears flowing from the

corners of my eyes onto my glasses. When we got home, I put Jordan in his playpen. He played contentedly there for a long while, looking at his black and white mobile, and eventually fell asleep. I put a box of tissues on the dining room table and started to cry.

Once we started feeding Jordan formula, the change in him was almost immediate. He cried less and within a week, he gained what he should have gained in the past month. I figured out what the problem was: it wasn't that my milk didn't have enough calories, it was that I wasn't making enough milk to meet his needs.

After a week of feeding Jordan formula exclusively, I started nursing again. Jordan thrived on the combination of breast milk and formula, and we continued this way for quite a while.

Today, Jordan is a happy, healthy, 3-and-a-half year old, and I've learned to trust my gut more. But I still carry with me that feeling of horror; realizing I hadn't trusted my instincts and had let my baby go hungry.

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