

# OmegaMatters

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## Breastfeeding: why it influences babies' potential

With Breastfeeding Awareness week taking place between 1st-7th August, we have chosen to explore why breastfeeding is so important for children. Cited frequently as having a direct impact upon children's development, we want to raise awareness as to how we can all give our children the best start in life.

**Why breastfeed?** - The consensus amongst the medical community is that breastfeeding gives babies the best start in life. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a minimum of two years' breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Providing all the nutrients a baby needs, there are many reasons why breastfeeding improves babies' health and is thought to boost overall IQ. Breast milk also helps the child's immune system to develop and withstand infection, providing protection against diarrhoea and respiratory tract infection which is more common in babies which have been bottle-fed formula milk, according to the medical journal *Pediatrics*. [i]

Of course another important aspect of breastfeeding is the development of the maternal bond, both physically and emotionally, as a result of the hormones oxytocin and prolactin being released during breastfeeding. These relax the mother and make her feel more nurturing toward her baby. [ii]

**Source of nourishment** - The mother is the sole source of nourishment when she is breastfeeding. It is therefore of the utmost importance that good dietary and lifestyle habits which most mothers adopt during pregnancy are continued whilst lactating. Before you gasp, however, there is a clever evolutionary mechanism which lets the mother's body suffer, not the quality of her milk, if she doesn't eat enough of the right foods. This is because the nutritional properties of food are passed on to the baby, while only the surplus nourishes the mother.

The quality of most mothers' milk is likely to be fairly constant regardless of diet (with the exception of extreme nutritional deprivation), although the quantity of milk is likely to be affected. Regardless, it is important for the mother to be as healthy as possible, with sufficient energy to care for her child – meaning that mothers should do all they can to look after their own health too. A well balanced diet is crucial.

**Brain-building fatty acids** - The brain is over 60% fat, comprising omega-3 and omega-6 long-chain fatty acids. Indeed every cell membrane in the body is made up of fatty acids; these are absolutely vital nutrients which we rely on for optimum health. The developing foetus is totally dependent on the mother's supply of fatty acids during pregnancy (during the last trimester the brain grows at an astonishing rate when fatty acids are especially important) and then further supplies are drawn from the mother's breast milk through breastfeeding. After breastfeeding we derive the fatty acids we need from our diets, so we really are what we eat.

If the mother's diet doesn't compensate for the increased nutritional needs during breastfeeding, it is not uncommon for the mother's own stores of fatty acids to become depleted. Each child in succession may then obtain fewer and fewer amounts of essential nutrients. This depletion of the mother's stores for the child's development can explain why younger siblings may have more developmental and behavioural problems than firstborn children, especially if they

are close in age. Fatty acid deficiencies can upset the delicate balance of chemicals in the brain, leaving mothers susceptible to postnatal depression, as well as other nutritional deficiency-related conditions.

In a recent major intervention study, [iii] researchers found that breastfeeding really does boost intelligence. Over 14,000 children were observed for more than six years and it was found that those who were breastfed performed significantly better in tests of IQ. At 6 years old, children exclusively breastfed as babies scored on average 5.9 points higher in tests of overall intelligence. On tests of verbal intelligence, breastfed children scored 7.5 points higher, and 2.9 points higher in tests of non-verbal intelligence.

The researchers have not concluded whether the IQ boost is due to the breast milk itself in terms of its nutritional content of fatty acids and other nutrients, or whether the physical and social interaction between mother and child enables a child to better reach its potential.

According to nutrition scientist Dr Nina Bailey, "Studies imply that the fatty acids naturally found in breast milk support the developmental needs for both brain and eye development as well as cardiovascular health in the newborn. The choice between breastfeeding and alternative formulations may therefore have profound implications later in life."

#### References

[i] PEDIATRICS Vol. 115 No. 2 February 2005, pp. 496-506.

[ii] Dettwyler K; Stuart-Macadam P (1995). Breastfeeding: Biocultural Perspectives. Aldine Transaction, p. 131.

[iii] Kramer et al, Breastfeeding and child cognitive development: new evidence from a large randomized trial. Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2008 May;65(5):578-84.

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# Helping children with health, behaviour and learning difficulties

By Dr Clive Lindley-Jones

**One of the joys of living in a town like Oxford is that, as I did last night, I can cycle down the road and enjoy hearing lectures from the likes of John Stein Professor of Physiology, of Magdalene College.**

As many will know, he has done a lot of exciting work on the brain and dyslexia. This lecture covered his fascinating research into the role of fast-acting magnocellular nerve cells found throughout the brain especially in the cerebellum, in a wide range of specific learning difficulties, through their influence on attention, reading, mood and conduct. He highlighted the importance of omega-3 fatty acids in the cell walls of these vital cells and therefore their importance in visual, auditory and kinaesthetic responses.

I was pleased to see that even at this specific level of university research the wider, multi-dimensional implications of learning difficulties were well understood.

The Sunflower Trust is a charity aimed at addressing these problems of neural disorganisation in a rather unique manner. The Sunflower Therapy comes

out of the work of osteopath Mark Mathews, himself affected by dyslexia, when he found that by putting many of the exciting clinical discoveries he was learning in his exploration of Osteopathy, Neuro Linguistic Programming and most specifically the diagnostic tool of Applied Kinesiology, he could have profound effects on many children who came to him with specific learning difficulties.

So exciting were his results that, after an initial encouraging pilot trial with Educational Psychologist Elizabeth Thomas in the early 1990s, the Sunflower Trust was formed in 1996 to promote, develop, and research this work and, through raising funds to provide bursaries, to make the tools that Mathews had blended together so creatively and effectively, more widely available. The therapy uses a combination of natural techniques to balance many aspects of physical, physiological and psychological problems in measurable ways that are matched individually to each child.

An important merit of the integrative approach of the Sunflower Therapy is its ability to address many aspects of structural, nutritional/biochemical and

psychological disturbances for children suffering specific learning difficulties like dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, and autistic spectrum disorders. The nervous system connects all these structural, biochemical and mental aspects together.

## Tom's Story

**For the first time since Tom started school four years ago I am not worried about his future, this is huge for me as a mother.**

**Tom started school with the teachers unable to understand him and no friends as he couldn't interact with other children despite having an older brother and younger sister. After a few weeks the school identified his problems as the result of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.**

**A friend showed me the article in the Times about the Sunflower Trust and I now had to get Tom on the programme so I booked an appointment with Clive Lindley-Jones in Oxford. He said that he thought that he could help him. Tom started a programme which is a course of ten**



Clive Lindley-Jones B.Ed. (Hons) D.O. D.I.B.A.K. is a member of the General Osteopathic Council, A Diplomat of the International Board of Applied Kinesiology and a senior Trainer for the Sunflower Trust. Clive uses our clinical-grade product Vegepa as part of his treatment programme, also recommending VegeCO and MiniVegeCO where needed to top up vitamin and mineral micronutrients.

For more information about the Sunflower Trust visit [www.sunflowertrust.com](http://www.sunflowertrust.com) or phone 0845 054 7509. To book an appointment with Clive at Helix House Natural Health Centre in Oxford, call 01865 243351 or visit [www.helixhouse.co.uk](http://www.helixhouse.co.uk)

different sessions which act like building blocks to create a happier child, from “bone crunching”, as Tom called it, to cranial osteopathy and watch as Tom’s body would go weak and floppy when holding a pen and paper and through Applied Kinesiology to strong and confident after the treatment holding the same pen and paper...

Tom has his own ‘Mantra’, which he calls his ‘magic spell’ which gives him strength, calmness, confidence and happiness and he says it to himself in times of need.

I can never thank Clive and the Sunflower Trust enough for giving me my son back. I took Tom and my other two children to an Art Gallery Workshop last week. We (children and adults) were invited to look around the gallery and then come back and share our thoughts. The exhibition was of paintings of different sizes of circles going around and around on each other. Tom’s hand was the first to go up – in a loud confident voice Tom said “I think it is a young boy on his bike going round and round and the circles are the stories of his life”. The whole room was amazed by an eight year old’s perception of life.

So as Tom’s story of his Sunflower journey and the fine work of Professor Stein both tell us, there are many foods for our brain. Getting them all working together can make all the difference to many more children in the future, if the Sunflower Trust can keep raising its funds.

The work of the Sunflower Trust shows the way forward for the importance of addressing all sides of this triad of health. We certainly need good nutrition to run our brains optimally, but we also need balanced reflexes, well functioning muscles and good coordination. If a child starts to have difficulties in learning very soon she/he may start to develop disempowering beliefs that, so easily, take over when an intelligent child just seems to find so much of school work an impenetrable jungle.

It is through its success at helping to unscramble many of just these aspects of neural disorganisation that has led the work of the Sunflower Trust to be studied and used by over one hundred osteopaths, medical doctors, chiropractors, psychologists and physiotherapists in both Britain and Germany over the last twelve years.

I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis just over a year ago and my doctor put me on a course of corticosteroids to help alleviate the symptoms. I’m now finding that not only am I having trouble sleeping but my blood pressure is now higher than it should be. Could these be related to the treatment? Are there any more natural treatments you can advise to help me manage my symptoms?

*Sandra, B. Nottingham*

Ulcerative colitis is an increasingly common form of digestive problem believed to be a result of the immune system reacting abnormally to the bacteria in the digestive tract, causing excess inflammation. Whilst treatment using corticosteroids can be highly effective, prolonged use can lead to insomnia, mood alterations, increased appetite and hypertension. Trouble with your sleeping patterns and raised blood pressure may indeed be caused by the corticosteroid medication you have been prescribed. It is, however, possible to modulate inflammatory disorders by adapting your diet and also consuming high-EPA fish oil.

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If you have any questions you’d like to ask our nutrition expert, please write in to Dr Nina. If your letter is published, we’ll send you two free tubs of Vegepa. Please send your questions to: Dr Nina, Igennus, St John’s Innovation Centre, Cowley Road, Cambridge, CB4 0WS or e-mail [info@igennus.com](mailto:info@igennus.com)

evening primrose oil, works synergistically to reduce the inflammatory products derived from the long-chain omega-6 fatty acid arachidonic acid – high levels of which are associated with many inflammatory disorders. Increasing your consumption of EPA will stimulate an increased production of valuable anti-inflammatories and concurrently block the production of inflammatory products. EPA also provides numerous health benefits for the cardiovascular system, the brain and overall health.

Individuals with inflammatory bowel conditions often also have issues with the balance of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ bacteria, so I would advise taking pre- and pro-biotics to encourage the growth of good bacteria which can be depleted in ulcerative colitis. By topping up your good bacteria you are helping to safeguard your body against the consequences of bad bacteria overgrowth, improving the overall function of the digestive system, helping to process food, absorb nutrients (vitamins, minerals and enzymes) and maintain a healthy immune system. If you are able to stick to this regime, and reduce certain floods in the diet which promote inflammation (such as red meat, dairy, excess sugar and alcohol), you will notice even bigger improvements in your digestive health. Ultimately, safeguarding the digestive system is one of the most essential aspects of maintaining overall health and well-being.

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# Fibromyalgia patient skydives after daily dose of Vegepa



## Here's Nola-Amber's story...

"I used to be full of health, always active and rarely ill. Then in October 2000 after two weeks of feeling very poorly (stiffness, photophobia, headaches, loss of bodily controls, high temperature etc) I was finally diagnosed and admitted to hospital

with viral meningitis. Once treated I was released to recover at home. My recovery was slow, and the exhaustion and immediate pain I was left with became quite a burden. My pain and exhaustion did not get better and after various GP appointments I began to feel that this silent suffering would continue and that 'perhaps' I was inventing the symptoms.

"My symptoms continued to get worse, and along with depression there were days when I would not get out of bed. My morning stiffness had got increasingly worse and some days I would spend up to an hour getting out of bed! Even now I struggle with the mornings and my sleep. I think the point when I had had enough was when my hands and joints felt like they were failing me. Opening a bottle or a can was sometimes impossible. Holding something heavy was hard and to this day, sitting, standing and holding things for longer than five minutes really does test me.

"A friend recommended a specialist in muscular skeletal chronic pain. In 2003 I went to see this specialist, Dr Chris Parsons, privately. He was brilliant and I'm not sure he will ever realise the difference he has made to my life by giving this crippling pain and demoralising condition a name!! I spent almost 90 minutes with Dr Parsons and he concluded that despite there being no definitive test it was highly likely that I was suffering with Fibromyalgia (FMS). I was instructed to have the York Food test to eliminate any allergies (I was found to have a yeast intolerance). Food and FMS have been found to have a link. I also had blood tests to eliminate anything further such as coeliac disease (a condition I had as a young child). My results were clear (it is almost frustrating that a simple blood test cannot confirm such an illness).

"From this point onwards I visited GPs regularly; unfortunately they either lacked interest, knowledge, or both, and I found myself in the position so many other sufferers were...silenced! I was prescribed Amytriptiline on varying doses, but I was either left exhausted or awake and with little difference to my pain. I think for about 3 years following this, I gave up. I was away from home around people that did not understand, GPs that did not understand and I had no idea of the way forward.

"Then my luck changed. I saw an old friend whose parents and brother suffer from ME and/or FMS and they advised I took Vegepa. After looking at it online and discussing it with my Mum, she ordered a month's supply for me. Within a fortnight I felt dramatically more energised, my pain was alleviated and while I still have a poor immune system and pick up bugs left right and centre, my health and outlook is vastly improved. I take a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 depending on how I feel. Since October 2007, there has been one month when I did not take Vegepa due to lack of funds. I will never make that mistake again, as within that month I learned to appreciate the benefits so much more. My pain returned, my poor sleep, depression, mood swings and exhaustion etc. I am happier than ever and combating this condition full on. I have now moved back to Poole with my family and today I am off to see a GP who will refer me to a specialist and I can receive the appropriate care. I would recommend Vegepa to anyone and everyone. It is good for a person of good health and brilliant for a person with a condition like mine. FMS is not an easy condition to live with, but life is as good as it can be right now and I have Vegepa to thank."

Nola-Amber Smith

In view of the forthcoming Fibromyalgia Awareness Week, Nola will be doing a sponsored 13,000ft skydive on 13th August. To sponsor Nola, log on to [www.justgiving.com/nola333](http://www.justgiving.com/nola333).

We'd like to wish Nola the best of luck! For more information about Fibromyalgia, visit [www.fibromyalgia-associationuk.org](http://www.fibromyalgia-associationuk.org)

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