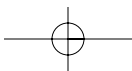
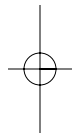
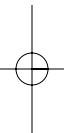
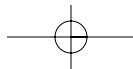
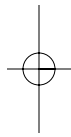
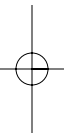
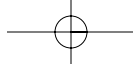


# Adventures in Tandem Nursing





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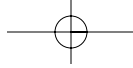
*Breastfeeding during Pregnancy and Beyond*

*by Hilary Flower*



L A L E C H E L E A G U E  
I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Schaumburg, Illinois



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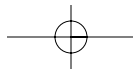
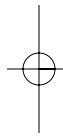
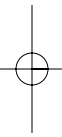
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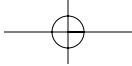
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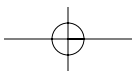
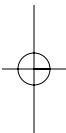
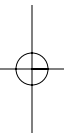
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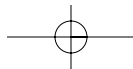
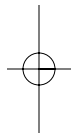
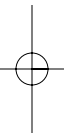
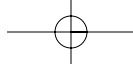
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I dedicate this book to  
Nora Jade





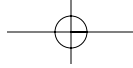
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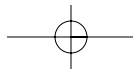


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## Foreword

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Every page of Hilary Flower's book delights me. A whole book on tandem nursing! Pages and pages of reassurance and advice! In 1975, when I was tandem nursing, I would have cried if I had found such a book. I'm so glad that we have it today. It's full of helpful information and personal support, and both are essential to breastfeeding success. And, with tandem nursing, you need an extra dose of each.

I became pregnant with my second child when my first was just nine months old. There was no question that I would continue to nurse my baby, but I had a million questions. I had just vaguely heard of the term *tandem nursing* at a La Leche League meeting. Like so many other areas of parenting, I couldn't imagine that I would ever tandem nurse, but it felt just right when I did.

I was very ambivalent at first. I believed that I should have been able to "plan" my pregnancies better, and felt a little guilty that I had not. Even though the situation initially appeared less than ideal, it was, in fact, perfect. I determined to surrender to what was actually happening and make it positive. I wanted to reconcile my love for my toddler-baby with my love for my new baby. I realized that in order to do so, I simply had to continue to respond to the needs of both of them, as I had already been doing all along. I also had to surrender to life as it really was—inherently out of my control.

In the beginning of my pregnancy, my nipples were sore. Increasing my intake of B vitamins with Brewer's yeast and blackstrap molasses helped the soreness. I don't remember being more hungry than I was with my first pregnancy, but I ate heartily regardless.

I sometimes felt confused about my loyalties to my babies. I had to admit that I was so attached to my daughter that I could not quite imagine the new baby added to our "perfect" life. As it turned out, once the new baby was born it immediately seemed as if he had always been there.

Once Finnie was born, I nursed him all of the time; my daughter, Lally, was nursing mainly to go to sleep. She saw her brother being born and loved him from the first, but at times

she got jealous. She was just 18 months old herself. Once when I was nursing the baby in the evening, she said to her father, “Papa take baby; Mama take Lally.”

Nursing them together was an engineering challenge. I was always looking for just the right piece of furniture and position, hoping I could get them both set up at once. Eventually, like all mother wisdom, it came to me and things got easier. My memories, though, are a blur of happy chaos. It was easier when I planned the co-nursings around naptimes. At other times, I was more successful nursing them one at a time. At naptimes, I could get the bed all fixed up with pillows under my arms and blankets for everyone. These were sweet moments and they are fond memories, but I also recall the times that I felt overwhelmed by their need for me. It helped if I just tried to live life with my babies one day at a time. Things changed so often, and now I know those baby days are over way too soon.

My two tandem nurslings are in their late twenties today. They have always been as close as twins, played well together as children, and have an easy demeanor with and a deep affection for one another. In fact, one of their favorite jokes with one another is about tandem nursing. Whenever my son goes to the dentist to get a filling, he blames his big sister. “You stole my calcium,” he quips.

I never regretted tandem nursing. It was always an obvious act of love. While it was not easy, it forged me into a better person. I was more able to give and more able to extend myself to meet legitimate needs. No one tells us this secret: Putting our babies first expands us and makes us more deeply human. It’s what grows us up. I recommend it.

*Peggy O’Mara*  
*Editor and Publisher*  
*Mothering Magazine*

## Introduction

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My path to writing this book began with a trip to the bookstore. At the time I had no thought of adding my own book to the shelves. Earlier that day I had been nursing my firstborn and wondering whether the baby inside me was the size of a strawberry or a plum. That was the moment, I suddenly realized that I was doing something out of the ordinary. My daughter was two years old, and I was thrilled to be pregnant. It never occurred to me to wonder how well pregnancy and breastfeeding would harmonize within my body.

On the shelves at the bookstore I discovered that most pregnancy books omitted any mention of breastfeeding during pregnancy. However, I was pleased to see that many breastfeeding books gave continued nursing the green light. When I discussed it with my midwife, she said that she had worked with many breastfeeding pregnant women. It didn't look as though there was a lot of concrete data available, but I was comfortable with breastfeeding and I was comfortable with pregnancy, and that was good enough for me.

The next time I gave thought to my overlapping of pregnan-

*Introduction*

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cy and breastfeeding was when my daughter started sleeping through the night toward the end of my first trimester. YES! I felt as if I had won an all-expense paid vacation to Hawaii! Those first nights of continuous sleep seemed an opulent gift to a tired pregnant mama. Also, I noticed I was having less morning sickness than I had in my previous pregnancy. I didn't know if there was a connection or not, but I wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

This heady upswing was followed by a roller-coaster downswing. The pain in my breasts began as a tingle, then a zing, and soon blossomed into an AAAGH! How could nursing suddenly turn from contentment to torture? I would cover my eyes as I nursed my daughter to sleep, a process that took extra long since my milk supply was plummeting. And I would wonder which was worse, dealing with this pain, or walking her to sleep? I called local La Leche League Leaders Tammy and Kelly and they confirmed my suspicion: it was caused by hormones at work, and there was nothing much to be done. At this point I began to feel as though I was on an adventure, the kind that the brochures depict with a sunset in the background but that really leaves you with a sunburn and blisters on your feet.

Then I noticed the second helping of food shifting from my plate to my daughter's. The more she ate, the less I ate, and the less time she spent at the breast. By mid-pregnancy she was no longer asking to nurse. I told my partner, incredulously, "Honey, I think she weaned!" What kind of sleight-of-hand had pregnancy pulled on my daughter? There she was, cuddling with me, playing happily, eating well, sleeping like a log, and none the wiser for her loss. What strange land were we in?

I soon got used to having my body back, and was looking back fondly on my two years of breastfeeding with my daughter as I glided into the third trimester of my pregnancy. Of course, when you're on an adventure it pays to expect the unexpected, and I should have been catching onto this by now. Then it happened. My daughter's casual nip at the breast yielded a surprise for her! Colostrum had arrived and my daughter was ready to move back in! My hesitations were no match for her insistence; it was as if her "weaning" had been a mirage. Not letting her return to nursing would have been like insisting on weaning her on the spot. So back to nursing we went. Although pregnant

nursing was still painful, I knew it would be short-lived. I looked forward to the birth of the baby in just a few weeks and thought that tandem nursing would be a wonderful way to soften my daughter's adjustment to the new baby.

Imagine my surprise when tandem nursing turned out to be nothing like I had imagined! We did have an ethereal first session when I emerged from the birthing pool and nursed them together for the first time. My new son was in that magical first hour of life. He locked eyes with his big sister as she nursed at the other breast, and she reached out her little hand to his miniature hand. I felt like Earth Mother as my love flowed into both children and their love completed the circle.

But for the next few weeks I was to see a wild side to my daughter, something I now know was quite normal after a new baby enters the scene. The problem was that my daughter and I both seemed to count on breastfeeding to smooth all of the rough edges. We were to learn that the opposite was true: we needed to work out the kinks in our relationship for breastfeeding to go well. My daughter had taken up testing limits at the breast, making each session a battle, but if I tried to set limits or rein her in she wailed as if her heart were broken. The more I bent the boundaries, the deeper into confusion we both seemed to get.

A bolder plan was clearly required. I began, out of necessity, to be firm, loving, and consistent with breastfeeding boundaries. And time, too, was on our side. As the weeks went by I noticed that our relationship began to return to its former grounding. Although we still had difficult days, my breasts were no longer the football in our back-and-forth struggles, and we were moving forward together now. Eventually I found that it worked best to set a policy of one nursing session a day. She would have liked more, but each morning we nursed and cuddled in bed, enjoying the quiet togetherness before rising, and I was able to savor those sessions right along with her.

I wrote about my experiences to understand them, and ultimately submitted a short essay to La Leche League's magazine *NEW BEGINNINGS*. I got a surprising response, suggesting that my adventure was not over yet.

It seemed that the LLLI Publications Department had been looking for someone to write a book about tandem nursing and

*Introduction*

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after reading my article, they wondered if I would be interested!

The more I thought about the scope of such a book, the more questions swarmed in my head. What do we know about the health and safety of breastfeeding during pregnancy? Are there any special dietary considerations for a healthy overlap? What are the boundaries between mother and child within the breastfeeding relationship? How does pregnancy affect the course of weaning—and why? How do other mothers process their experiences and choices? What is the range of experiences that are common for mothers breastfeeding during pregnancy or tandem nursing? What are the common laughs and heartaches? How have mothers addressed the various challenges? What phrases, situations, images, challenges, and joys make tandem nursing unique? My answer to writing the book was yes, and I knew my life was about to undergo another overhaul in the name of tandem nursing.

I set scientific research as my first task, and with the help of other mothers I generated a huge list of scientific questions, from health concerns to nutrition to milk production. The most burning question on my agenda was the health and safety issue. I knew that some mothers had been admonished by friends, relatives, and even sometimes their doctors that breastfeeding can cause miscarriage, preterm labor, or “rob the fetus of needed nutrients.” This contrasted sharply with the relaxed attitude of many breastfeeding specialists, and my own approach during pregnancy. I felt an urgent need to ground the discussion in facts as much as possible.

As a scientist by training I reveled in the opportunity to examine data, read scientific journals, and chat with folks who frown on “speculation.” I was astonished by the responsiveness of the scientific community. I would particularly like to thank Ann Prentice, PhD, Alan McNeilly, PhD, Peter Hartmann, PhD, Cathy Fetherston, CM, IBCLC, MSc, Dr. Mark Cregan, PhD, Erik Böhler, MD, PhD, Sherrill Moscona Goldman, MS, Grace Marquis, PhD, Lesley Regan, PhD, MD, David Weismiller, MD, Shelley McGuire, PhD, Katherine Dettwyler, PhD, Jim Chisholm, PhD, Meredith Small, PhD, and Marcia Goldfarb, PhD. And for sharing insights from their professional experience I would like to thank Ina May Gaskin, LM, Ian MacAgy, MD, my own midwife Anne Hirsch, LM, Karen Kerkhoff

Gromada, RN, BSN, IBCLC, Becky Hugh, IBCLC, Jack Newman, MD, and Thomas Hale, PhD.

This book comprises in-depth answers to all of the questions I could come up with, based on the best information currently available: all direct and indirect research, expert opinions, and pooled information from mothers. How to eat for three has been a puzzling proposition; here you will find tables that combine the RDAs for various stages of pregnancy and lactation, as well as practical suggestions for assessing and meeting your changing needs. My delving into molecular biology research sheds new light on two central mysteries: how breastfeeding might affect the pregnant uterus, and the mechanism by which pregnancy hormones may reduce milk supply. And anthropological research gives an indication of where tandem nursing fits on the human family tree—and it's not where I thought!

My mind was wide open as I pursued the safety question from many angles, and I had moments of uneasiness, wondering just what I would discover. Sometimes I looked at my vibrant infant son, asking myself if I had unwittingly taken risks with his pregnancy. As I researched and wrote and researched some more I came to feel confident that I had captured the cutting edge of what science can offer on this topic. Although there are many unanswered questions, my investigations impressed me with the intricately masterful design of the female body. Only time will tell if there are indeed areas of concern for mothers wishing to breastfeed through a healthy pregnancy. But my research has left me with a strong sense that a healthy mother can continue to breastfeed as long as it she stays in tune with her body's messages.

As exciting as the process of scientific inquiry was, I knew that even more meaningful work lay ahead. My concept of this book included mother wisdom and passion at its very core. Previously mothers' stories about breastfeeding during pregnancy and tandem nursing have been available from various sources outside of the mainstream, but I wanted to convene a huge virtual convention of mothers who have been there—and squeeze that into a book. I envisioned a text bubbling with mothers' voices and informed by their collective wisdom.

As my calls for input began to reach computers and mailboxes around the world I started hearing from mothers, first a

*Introduction*

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trickle and then a flurry. The mothering universe was clearly poised and ready to pour forth into the first full-length book on this topic. The outpouring was a worthy tribute to the many mothers who have struggled to find their way alone. Some mothers just dropped a story in my email in-box and many stuck around for back-and-forth questions and answers. Each mother offered me a fresh take, a new glimpse of the mysteries of the breastfeeding relationship and the adventure of overlapping it with a new pregnancy. For over a year I continued to be surprised by a twist or a nuance in each new contributor's story. Over 200 mothers from around the world offered their stories to this project; the text is a synthesis of this vast body of mother-knowledge, and includes a total of 224 direct quotes from 97 mothers and two fathers, from 10 countries and 34 states within the USA.

The candor, wisdom, and motherly fervor of the mothers who wrote me have touched me deeply and taught me a great deal. I am profoundly moved that so many mothers offered their precious and limited time to share themselves with this project. My heart particularly goes out in gratitude to my frequent correspondents Amanda Witman, Mary Butler, Sarah Gaunt, Loree Stickles-Noonan, Schai Pilkenton, Carissa Dollar, Andrea Damon, Ingrid Tilstra, Dawn Martin, Darillyn Starr, Meg Sondey, and Anthea Brown. Thank you to the many kind people who helped connect mamas to this project, including those from NEW BEGINNINGS, Mothering.Com, The Nursing Mom News, *Hip Mama*, the late Brigit Books, the parentsplace.com "Pregnant and Nursing" message board, FourFriends.com, Kellymom.com, and Lactnet. Closer to home I benefited greatly from the insights and support of my local LLL Leaders (and tandem nursing veterans) Kelly Bonyata, Anita Kilpatrick, Robin Watson, and Tammy Valley, and from the many tandem nursing mothers who shared stories at our monthly LLL "Park Day."

Each contributing mother provided her own pieces in an increasingly representative (though not exhaustive) mosaic of experiences. As I collected and synthesized this body of motherly wisdom, I followed up with mothers about my points of confusion and curiosity. In this way, many tandem nursing mothers helped make sure I stayed true to the tandem nursing experience. And my own tandem nursing days, still ongoing,

helped me steer straight, too. Once, while writing about the pain of breastfeeding during pregnancy, I caught myself wondering: “Good grief, are these mothers martyrs?!” And I had to laugh, because when I was the one feeling the pain, and it was my daughter nursing down to a much-needed nap, I wasn’t feeling like a martyr. I was like any other mother—doing what seemed best in the moment.

The mothers’ experiences provide a range of possible things that could happen, some tips, and a wealth of personal moments. The unifying themes of this book are simple:

- Yes, normal beautiful mothers are really doing this.
- Each mother goes through an emotional and physical experience unique to herself and her nursing.
- Similarly, there is no one “best” approach to the challenges of breastfeeding during pregnancy and tandem nursing; each mother must follow her own inner voice as she balances her needs and her children’s needs. Trust yourself.
- Connecting with other mothers who have been there can make all the difference.

There is nothing like tandem nursing while corresponding with a couple hundred tandem mamas—what an incredible opportunity to learn from others in similar positions! And then, my daughter weaned for good, after four years of nursing, eighteen months after her brother was born, and nine months into the writing of the book. I had helped set a time for this closure, but she was ready, indeed she was intrigued by weaning. She nursed only a little during our final session, then came off to say: “Mama, ask me if I want na-na, and I might say yes and I might say no.” I obeyed. Her proud reply: “No thank you.” The next day, she reflected: “I weaned from the sling, I weaned from diapers, and now I weaned from na-na!”

As I continued work on this book I was treated to occasional glimpses of her working through her feelings about breastfeeding and about weaning. Once she asked if she would ever be a baby again. “Why?” I asked. “Because I want to have na-na again someday,” she replied dreamily. Now, only a few months later, my daughter claims not to remember ever having nursed. After all the weeks of drama and months of routine that went

## Introduction

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into our four years of breastfeeding, nursing has slipped back into her unconscious like so many other emblems of her tender early years.

And now at last I am feeling as though this book is ready, too, to take big steps into the wider world.

*Who this book is for.* Many mothers are still breastfeeding an infant or toddler when the possibility (or actuality!) of another pregnancy arises. If you are a mother who is wondering if she has to wean during pregnancy, curious about tandem nursing, eager to know what to expect, or encountering difficulties—this book has been written for you. Many of my contributors wrote with emotion about their hope that they could make a difference for you.

Or have you perhaps picked this book up in order to better support a breastfeeding mother in your life? Whether you are a friend or a partner, a La Leche League Leader or lactation consultant, a prenatal caregiver or a grandmother, please feel welcome within these pages. You have an important role to play for the mother in question and you will have questions of your own.

And finally, I hope that this collection of facts, experiences, and burning questions may be of some use to future researchers who wish to push the envelope on this important but under-researched area of human experience.

*How to read this book.* Reading this book straight through can offer an overview. With a problem and a few minutes to spare, I hope that you can readily flip through and find what you need. As you go along through your own adventure, checking in to see what other mothers have experienced may be meaningful, too. Sharing certain sections with your caregiver or a loved one may also be helpful.

If you find yourself with difficult decisions or problems, there is no substitute for face-to-face support and good old-fashioned soul searching, and I hope that this book can support that larger process. Similarly, I have tried to address a wide variety of issues insofar as they relate to tandem nursing, and to point you to other books on related topics to more fully address the nitty gritty of such undertakings as weaning, loving discipline, or

breastfeeding an adopted baby.

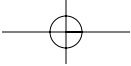
Part One lays out a range of experiences and practical issues that are common when breastfeeding and pregnancy overlap and during tandem nursing. Each chapter takes a theme and spans across pregnancy to tandem nursing. In Part Two we will explore in detail the issues of health and nutrition. In Part Three these myriad pieces come to life as mothers tell their stories.

As you dip in and out of the range of experiences from mothers shared in this book, you will notice that some resonate with you and others seem oddly foreign. Your own adventure will be yet another new tandem story, full of your own special challenges, insights, feelings, and surprises.

*How this project became a book.* Behind every good writer there's a great editor, and I have reveled in the support of a dream team. Katherine Solan's offer of this project was an act of faith I will never forget. Her magic wand with organization, her outstanding judgment on all matters, her good humor, and her big heart make her the best editor this writer can imagine. (And from a satellite office, too!) I would like to warmly thank Judy Torgus for expertly polishing the manuscript and working long hours to transform it into a real live book. It is a privilege to work with you. Thank you also to the many hands at La Leche League International who guided and cared for this project, including Kathleen Whitfield, Michaelene Gerster, Paul Torgus, and especially my guardian angel Nancy Jo Bykowski. Thank you to my warm and inspiring mentors in LLLI authorship, Norma Jane Bumgarner (who improved the manuscript with her editorial eye and propelled this project along in many ways), Diana West, and Diane Bengson.

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## *Introduction*

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