

## TLC for Nursing Moms

### The Lactation Club at Parkwest Delivers Confidence and Care

When little Finley Kennedy came into the world, he came with no complications. Mom Patricia Kennedy says support from the lactation consultants at Parkwest Medical Center helped breastfeeding begin just the way nature intended.

Things weren't so simple after mother and baby went home, though. In addition to the exhaustion every new mother experiences and the stress of having a baby during a pandemic, feeding Finley became a real struggle.

"He seemed to get tired and worn out while nursing," Kennedy says. "He would even cry when trying to nurse like he was frustrated. I didn't know what was wrong."

Kennedy kept trying, nursing him at least every two hours. "It was a

struggle, working to get him to latch on, stay latched and then repeatedly relatching," Kennedy says.

"One day, my sister

visited. She saw me nursing, and she asked if I always had to work that hard to breastfeed him," Kennedy says. "I was confused."



Patricia Kennedy and baby Finley

Kennedy had thought Finley's nursing was normal. She wondered if it was easier for other babies.

"I started to question if I was adequate, if I was a good enough mother, if I was doing this whole thing wrong," she recalls.

Although Finley was growing and seemed healthy, Kennedy had a mother's intuition that something wasn't right.

She wondered if Finley might have lip and tongue ties, a condition caused by overly short or thickened membranes connecting the lips to the gums and the tongue to the floor of the mouth.

The concerned mother was at a loss. She didn't know what to do or where to go for help. Then she remembered hearing about The Lactation Club (TLC), a lactation support group at Parkwest.

"TLC is a support group that meets weekly. Mothers can sign up by calling 865-374-7275. We encourage pregnant women to call Teddy Bear University for our breastfeeding classes to learn about breastfeeding their baby before they deliver," says lactation consultant Mary Alice Wagner, RN, IBCLC. Parkwest has five International Board-certified lactation consultants.

Kennedy received a warm welcome and says



Mary Alice Wagner, RN, IBCLC

she felt safe when she saw COVID-19 precautions were in place. Best of all, she got the guidance and moral support she needed.

"They were so positive, affirming and encouraging," Kennedy says. "It's such a simple thing, but those words of support lifted me up and helped me feel like I could do this 'mom thing!'"

Each week, lactation consultants provided guidance and helpful suggestions. Then one day Wagner noticed something while Kennedy was in the process of breastfeeding. It was a small tremor in Finley's jaw.

Wagner helped Kennedy understand why nursing had been so difficult, and helped her find the words to better describe the problem to Finley's pediatrician. As a result, Kennedy was able to get a referral to an oral surgeon. "The oral surgeon

immediately confirmed what I had suspected and what Mary Alice helped identify," Kennedy says. "Finley did indeed have a lip and tongue tie."

After a procedure to correct the problem, breastfeeding became easier. "Having the support group helped me face this and other new challenges," Kennedy says.

Kennedy became a more confident mom. Soon she was offering support to other members of the group.

Finley continues to thrive after Kennedy's maternity leave. She looks back, grateful for her experience at Parkwest Medical Center and for the help and support she received from the hospital's lactation support group, especially in sharing with other mothers the unique circumstance of having a baby during a worldwide pandemic.

"Becoming a mother is a time when you need help, you need understanding, you need a shoulder to cry on and you need someone to just say you are doing great," Kennedy says. "This group has meant so much to me -- we are in this together."

The Lactation Club at Parkwest Medical Center is part of the hospital's Teddy Bear University, helping parents gain confidence in caring for babies. To learn more, visit [TreatedWell.com/childbirth](http://TreatedWell.com/childbirth).



Baby Finley

## Beautiful Beginnings What Every Mom-to-Be Should Know

Parkwest Medical Center offers support and guidance for mothers who decide to breastfeed. That means more than just handing out advice.

Nurses at the bedside take mother and baby through a step-by-step process to ensure the best beginning. First, the baby is strategically placed on the mother's chest, skin-to-skin. It's more than just cuddle time. Lactation consultant Mary Alice Wagner, RN, IBCLC says the skin-to-skin time enhances the hormones needed for breastfeeding. It also helps stabilize the baby's body temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate and blood sugar.

New mothers are encouraged to nurse within the first hour. This is a

time when the hormone oxytocin can best release colostrum (the initial form of milk after delivery) and milk to satisfy a newborn. The oxytocin surge also helps decrease a mother's bleeding after delivery.

Mothers are then encouraged to nurse during the first week when the hormone prolactin is at a high level. This hormone helps the mother produce more of the milk her baby needs.

#### Home Sweet Home

Having a new baby in the home is a big adjustment and adding the demands of nursing can make the transition even more stressful. Wagner offers some insight about baby's needs at home.

"Newborns need to eat eight to 12 times in 24 hours and be content after they feed," Wagner says. "Once mom's milk is in, two to four days after birth, babies should have six to eight wet diapers a day, and one to 10 yellow, seedy stools a day."

Newborn babies give cues to let mothers know when they're ready to eat. These cues can include hand-to-mouth movements, sucking motions, tongue thrusting, becoming more alert and a succession of short whimpers.

Crying babies need to be calmed before nursing. Swaddling, swaying side-to-side, rocking and allowing the baby to suck on mom's clean finger can all help, and sometimes

a baby just needs to be burped for tummy comfort. Make sure the baby's diaper is clean, too.

Babies who sleep when they should nurse can usually be wakened with a diaper change, by removing a blanket or burping the baby. Rolling baby from side to side or to a sitting position can also help.

For moms who still struggle, Wagner says there is help available outside the hospital.

"Any mother who feels breastfeeding is not going as she thinks it should can call our office," Wagner says. She adds that moms can also find help 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Tennessee Breastfeeding Hotline at 855-423-6667.

## Teddy Bear University

The process of bringing new life into the world is an exciting time that's filled with promise, but there's no owner's manual for a new baby.

The drastic life change can be a little scary. Parkwest Medical Center offers help through Teddy Bear University.

Teddy Bear University is a program to provide education and support for new parents and new parents-to-be. Parents can attend special classes to prepare for labor and delivery and learn infant CPR.

Parkwest also offers breastfeeding classes through Teddy Bear University. The Lactation Club (TLC) meets weekly and includes lactation consultants whose expert advice and support helps nursing mothers feed their babies "nature's way" with confidence.

Each class in Teddy Bear University is conducted with safety as a top priority, including social distancing and use of face coverings.

While parents learn how to bring a baby into the world safely, moms and dads are kept safe, too.

For a schedule of classes and more information, visit [CovenantHealth.com/teddybearu](http://CovenantHealth.com/teddybearu), or call 865-374-7275 (374-PARK).



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