

My BabyGym experience as a clinic nurse

Barbara Chambers

I read about BabyGym in a proposal letter from a BabyGym instructor to the national coordinator of our hospital. I could see how the BabyGym training would assist me in the milestone assessments and benefit future babies that were going to come through the doors of the hospital. The hospital was brand new and there were no educational funds, so I paid for the training myself.



During training I had multiple “ah-hah” moments and found the information extremely inspirational, especially from a childbirth educator’s perspective. Only one of them was the importance of breastfeeding from both breasts so that the eyes cross the midline and stimulate both parts of the brain. I now know that that feeding from one side has led to reading and learning difficulties in my youngest son and encourage all mothers not to give in to babies who get choosy about feeding on one side. I also encourage all parents who choose to bottle feed to make sure they do so holding baby from both sides.

I am passionate about the importance of breastfeeding and this has led me to introduce many mothers to BabyGym. I show the techniques used to stimulate sucking and oral development in week three to help their babies suckle at the breast successfully. Especially the sleepy ones! The mothers are amazed to learn that the reflex is in the palms of the hands and this leads to a more satisfied feed! It is also so encouraging when mothers in the group, report that their babies have never slept so well before!

Here are some of my successes with BabyGym:

1. While working with the case study babies for my practical part of the training, I could clearly see the improvement in their core muscle development. The improvement in the immunity of one of those babies was also phenomenal! She was suffering from eczema when she started BabyGym, but by the third session the baby’s skin had cleared and that baby has not been ill at all during the first 2 years of her life and had no further outbreaks of eczema.
2. I have been working with a baby that had been compromised at birth. The physical improvements for this baby have been dramatic. There was very little hope of any normal development for this little baby, NEVER SAY NEVER! I have to add that it has been a pleasure working with the parents of this baby who have such commitment to bring results with determination and love.
3. I have also seen how the mother’s have benefitted from being more active in their children’s development. This has played a pivotal role in their confidence as parents. There have been many “WOW!” moments in class when explaining the links between neural development, massage and movement to the parents. I am positive that because they are massaging their own babies, they are



feeling much more relaxed and thus cope better with handling a much calmer baby.

4. I have been able to train some of the caregivers/ nannies, so that when the mother goes to work, she knows her child is being taken care of in a stimulating and constructive manner. This is extremely important for their work environment. The nannies are also so grateful for the knowledge we give them to make their work more meaningful. Receiving a certificate at the end of the course gives them such a sense of fulfilment.

5. I can report that when I see BabyGym trained babies (who have practiced it well at home) return for developmental milestone assessments after a few months, they often walk at a slightly later age and therefore crawl for a much longer period. This results in much stronger core muscles. Their eyes sparkle and their speech is clear. Once, when I did come across a baby that did not crawl appropriately, but had done the BabyGym course, the mother admitted that they had not done the work at home. It was easy to tell her to go back to the drawing board and practice, practice, practice!

I often see 6 year olds for their vaccinations at the time when they've been tested for school readiness. Seeing the number of children who are not school ready by the age of 6 has emphasised the importance of movement and body awareness we instil during week three, four and five of BabyGym. A child's future self esteem and confidence in learning at school level, starts at a very early age!

Many mothers think of BabyGym as a "nice to do, added benefit". I know it is an essential path to future learning. It is therefore a "must do" for all future learners in this country. If pregnant parents are able to complete the firm foundations program before their baby is born, they are able to apply their knowledge from day 1. Imagine the potential of these babies? The beauty of BabyGym is that the mother has a "hands on" role in her baby's development and future, on a day to day basis, from home!

It is my dream to see a BabyGym clinic nurse in every hospital countrywide. This will enable us to reach many more babies. I have done a little work with the local community but we need the message of consistency to filter across to the parents of these children.

BabyGym continues to inspire me and I have now retired from the corporate world to concentrate on equipping new mothers with BabyGym knowledge on a full time basis.

With BabyGym a better tomorrow is a reality.

