Elena and Carlos check in at the front desk of the Women’s Health Services clinic. They hold hands, anxious and hopeful that Elena’s doctor will give them the news they have been waiting so long to hear.

Are you sure you don’t want to sit down? How do you feel?

I feel wonderful! This is it. I know it. I feel it.

Elena, come on back.
Congratulations! The blood tests confirm it. You’re having a baby.

The doctor hands the couple several flyers about proper diet, exercise, and fetal growth.

WIC has many great prenatal classes to help parents get ready for the baby’s birth.

Thank you, Doctor Ramos. We’ll sign up right away.

Look, there’s an office near us! And they have classes in the evening. I can make it after work.

A few weeks later, Elena and Carlos attend a WIC prenatal class.

Thank you for coming to this class on prenatal nutrition. You should also take our WIC class on breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is one of the most important choices you can make for your baby’s health.

Breastfeeding gives your children a healthy start that will follow them all their lives. We’ll tell you all the ways WIC can support your breastfeeding efforts so please don’t miss this class.

Elena: A New Mother’s Journey
Elena’s family supports her going to prenatal classes. But in one area, they offer very mixed advice.

Well, I was lucky. I didn’t work after I had you and your sisters so I was able to breastfeed. It’s the best thing really.

These days formula is made just like mother’s milk. And bottles are less embarrassing in public!

The first six weeks were fine. But then I had to go to work. Someone had to feed the baby while I was gone and formula was just easier.

I’m so confused!

I can come down this afternoon? Thank you!

Maybe you can call WIC? They gave us the number in class.

At the WIC office, Elena strikes up a conversation with another mother.

My family and friends say different things. I thought WIC could help me figure it out.

I wish I had been that smart with my first baby! I let too many people give me the wrong advice.

I think if I had breastfed my little boy he wouldn’t have been sick so much. He had a cold every month that first year and he gained too much weight with formula.

But I won’t make that mistake again!
What concerns do you have?

Is breastfeeding really worth all the hard work?

I've made my choice! I want to breastfeed!

If it's best for the baby, it's best for us.

Not breastfeeding is even harder on babies. Without the immunity they get from mother's milk, they suffer more from colic, allergies, and colds which means missed days at work and higher medical costs for mom and dad.

Honey, it's time!

I'll get the car!

I called the doctor. He's on his way.

After a long labor, Elena gives birth at dawn to a healthy girl. A nurse hands the baby to Elena for her first feeding. She helps Elena adjust her gown so mother and daughter can lie skin to skin and bond, an important step before breastfeeding that Elena learned in her WIC prenatal classes.

She feels so tiny in my arms.

She's so beautiful.

And hungry! Look how she latches on.
Elena’s family arrives later that day for their first glimpse of the newborn baby, Rosita. Elena rushes through her daughter’s latest feeding to be ready for their arrival but grows anxious when Rosita unexpectedly fusses and refuses to feed.

Rosita isn’t holding on.

But she should be hungry by now.

She keeps turning away!

I’ll call the nurse back. Maybe she can help.

Elena’s mother and sisters arrive as the nurse leaves.

Oh, she looks like an angel! But, you look so tired!

The baby is fussing.

We can feed her while you rest.

But I breastfed her before and she did great. I don’t understand.

Don’t worry! We’re here now. We can do this for you.

But I just want to –

Hi, I’m your nurse this afternoon. You’re having problems breastfeeding? Some newborns take a while to latch on so we offer bottles, too.

But I wanted to breastfeed only. The other nurse knew that and was able to help me. Is she available?

I’m sorry. She’s with another patient and I don’t have that kind of training. I’ll send her as soon as possible.

Elena: A New Mother’s Journey
We understand. We went through it ourselves. Every mother needs to find the way that’s best for her. Come, girls, let’s leave them to enjoy their beautiful baby in peace.

Carlos sees that his wife is feeling overwhelmed by her well-meaning family and steps in.

We just want to help, Elena.

And you will! Especially once we’re on our own at home. But maybe now isn’t the right time. What do you think, Elena?

We’ll come back for a visit later when you’re ready.

Elena’s nurse enters as her family leaves.

Hello, I hear you’re worried that your baby won’t breastfeed.

She won’t latch on this time! Am I doing something wrong?

No! I was so anxious to get the baby ready for my family that I forgot!

Not at all! Mothers and babies just need time to get to know one another. Did you remember to put her skin to skin first? That usually helps.

I remember in our WIC classes they said families can help by making sure the mom has quiet time with her baby. I love you and I appreciate all your help. But I think that’s what we might need right now.

Hello, I hear you’re worried that your baby won’t breastfeed.

Elena: A New Mother’s Journey
The nurse helps put the baby directly on Elena’s chest. Soon the hungry baby calms down and wriggles around to latch on.

She’s feeding, I can feel it!

I’ll be back for the next feeding. Remember: if you have any questions when you get home you can always call WIC. Before you leave the hospital in the morning, you should call WIC for an appointment.

The next day Elena is ready to leave the hospital. This time the confidence in her decision to breastfeed is obvious.

Do you want this gift bag for bottlefeeding mothers? It has free formula and lots of coupons for more.

Thank you so much!

No thank you! I already have my gift bag for breastfeeding mothers. It’s all I need!
When you go to the hospital, tell your nurses and doctors that you want to breastfeed as soon as possible after your baby is born.

Ask that your baby be placed skin-to-skin on you after delivery. This can help maintain your baby’s temperature and breathing. It can also increase your milk supply.

Have your baby stay in your room. “Rooming in” encourages skin-to-skin contact and helps you recognize early feeding cues such as when your baby starts sucking his or her fist.

Speak up. Tell staff no formula, water or a pacifier unless there is a medical reason.

Ask your nurse to help you breastfeed. The nurse should watch you breastfeed several times and can tell if your baby is latching on and getting milk. Breastfeeding may be uncomfortable at first, but it should not hurt. If it does, ask for help.

Breast milk is very important if your baby is born early or is sick. Breast milk can help your baby get better faster and develop properly. The nurses or lactation consultant can help you learn how to pump your milk if your baby cannot breastfeed.

When you leave, ask if you can call the hospital when you have questions about breastfeeding. Also ask for contacts from a breastfeeding support group in your area.

These suggestions and others can be provided by any WIC office or can be found at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/pages/wicBreastfeeding.aspx.

** From the Joint Commission’s “Speak Up” breastfeeding campaign at www.jointcommission.org/speakup_breastfeeding.