

# **Report on the breastpad survey undertaken on behalf of Lanowool owner, Lene Alexanderson**

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## **Introduction:**

In New Zealand at present there is a high initiation rate for breastfeeding (approximately 92 %) but a number of factors influence the continuation of breastfeeding by many women beyond the 2-6 week postpartum period, so that by the time of discharge from the Lead Maternity Carer only 40.4% of women (MOH, 2003) are still providing some breastmilk for their babies. Some of the main reasons why women tend to give up breastfeeding are known to be insufficient breastmilk, sore nipples, and mastitis (Mackenzie et al, 1998). Each of these factors can be prevented by careful education and support of women and their families by health professionals and mother-to-mother support groups (Benn, 1998).

A number of technologies, for example, nipple shields, feeding vessels, and sucking glasses have been in recorded use from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century but Fildes (1986) indicates that some instruments/equipment were in use before then. No historical literature seems to mention the use of breastpads. Breastpads seem to be a modern day invention and were mostly designed for use by women who needed some way of protecting their clothing from leaking milk, thus reducing discomfort and embarrassment. Currently a number of different companies produce and market breastpads including Avent, Medela, Pidgeon, and Lanowool. What is it that makes one product superior to another? Is it purely women's preference or does the product have a therapeutic effect that makes the purchase thereof worthwhile?

Lanowool is one of the breastpads that has become increasingly popular over the last few years and a survey was undertaken to determine which breastpads women use, the main reasons why they use them including problems women have encountered during the use, of the specific breastpads.

## **Method:**

A survey was commissioned by Lene Alexandersen and designed by the author of the report. A 3 page self-report, predominantly fixed choice questionnaire was designed and sent out, with a self-addressed reply paid envelope, with each purchase of a set of Lanowool breastpads. The questions included demographic information as well as reasons for use of breastpads, which pads were used, and which were the most effective. There was space for some qualitative comments about the Lanowool pads themselves in terms of who recommended them and in terms of the use of breastpads in general (see Appendix 1). An initial 100 questionnaires was forwarded to the Lanowool company for mailout and a further 100 were sent later in two batches of 50 copies each. In total 200 surveys were to be mailed out. Women who completed and returned the questionnaire directly to the author were deemed to have consented to

participate by such action. Completion of the questionnaires was voluntary and anonymous and participants were informed that they could refuse to answer some of the questions.

A total of 120 completed questionnaires were received over a period of about 18 months, giving a return rate of 60%. This report is based on the responses to the survey and consists of qualitative comments to illustrate the quantitative descriptive information gleaned.

### Results of the Survey

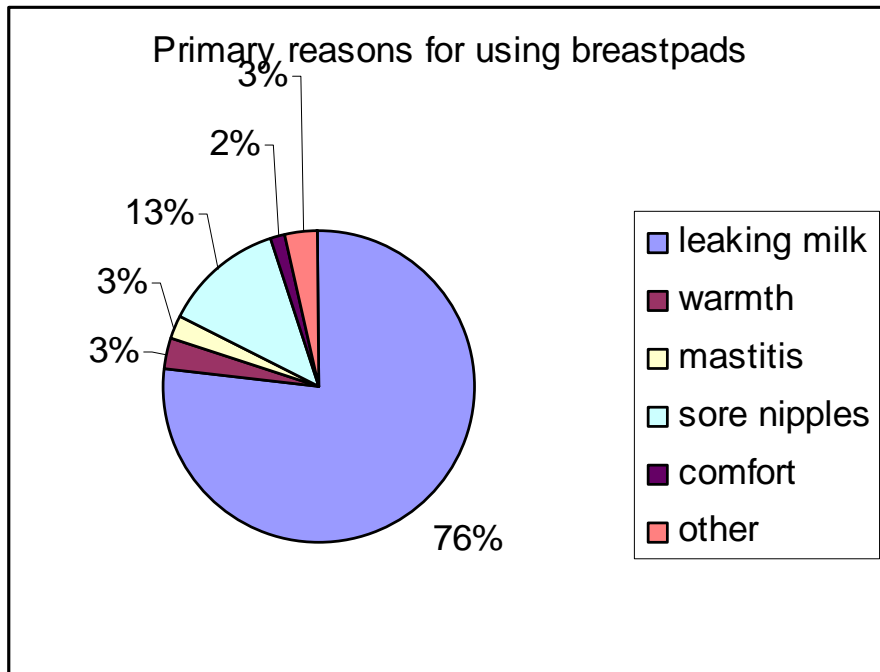
The one hundred and twenty women who completed the survey had an average age of 32 years, the youngest being 17 and the oldest 42 years of age. Two of the women who responded were pregnant but had not yet given birth to their babies while the majority of women (n=73/120; 60.1%) had one baby each and thirty-two women (26.6%) had more than one baby but less than 4. The majority of the women had completed some tertiary education (n=94/120; 78.3%). See Table One for the demographic results from the survey.

Table 1. Demographic data for the 120 survey respondents

Criteria	Number (N=120)	Percentage
Age ranges (in years)		
<b>16-24</b>	5	4.2
<b>25-34</b>	84	70
<b>35-44</b>	31	25.8
<b>&gt;44</b>	0	0
Parity (no. of babies)		
<b>0</b>	2	2.2
<b>1</b>	73	59.8
<b>2</b>	30	23.9
<b>3</b>	12	10.9
<b>4</b>	3	3.2
<b>&gt;4</b>	0	0
Education		
<b>Secondary school incomplete</b>	4	3.3
<b>Secondary school completed</b>	22	18.3
<b>Some tertiary education</b>	94	78.3

The majority of the women (93.3%) had breastfed all their babies and had used breastpads each time for a number of different reasons. The reasons breastpads were used are shown in Table 2. Although only one response was called for in this question, many women indicated a number of reasons for using breastpads, and it was not possible to determine which was the main reason. Therefore if number one was ticked it was taken as the primary reason. Table three presents secondary reasons for using breastpads.

Figure 1. Reasons given for using breastpads



Leaking breasts appear to be a very important reason for using breastpads with sore nipples being the second most important reason. The women who indicated other reasons for using breastpads wrote that the prevention of problems was the main reason for their use of breastpads.

Some of the women made the following comments about the reasons for using the breastpads, specifically Lanowool breastpads, and why they worked:

*I have found the Lanowool breastpads fantastic. They are comfortable, easy to wash. Your sore nipples don't stick to the pads...*

*Lanowool were the only ones that kept nipples warm when I had leaked. An added bonus!*

*[Lanowool] didn't stick to my nipples like other pads which was excellent.*

Table 2. Secondary reasons for using breastpads.

Secondary reason	Number of respondents	Percentage
Leaking breasts	38	34.2
Keep nipples warm	57	51.4
Prevent mastitis	1	0.9
Sore nipples	10	9.0
Comfort	2	1.8
Other	3	2.7
Total	111	100%

Keeping nipples warm and leaking breasts were the main secondary reasons given by the women who ticked more than one reason for using breastpads. Those women who indicated more than 2 reasons for using breastpads highlighted sore nipples (n=3;33%) and comfort (n=3;33%), as other important reasons for using breastpads.

The following comments provided by the responding women support the reasons why they used breastpads and which they found useful. Most of the positive comments were focussed on Lanowool pads:

*[Lanowool were] good for keeping nipples warm and are cheaper as [they] can be washed and re-used.*

*[Lanowool provides] superb comfort, warmth and small amounts of leaking milk, helped prevent mastitis.*

A variety of breastpads were used by the respondents with 111 (92.5%) indicating they used Lanowool breastpads. This is not an unexpected response as the survey was specifically sent to women requesting Lanowool breastpads. The other pads used included Johnson and Johnson pads (n= 63; 52.5 %), and Mothermates (n= 3; 2.5%). The women (n=44; 36.6%) also indicated under 'other' pads used, that a variety such as Tommee Tippee pads, Avent, Pidgeon, Medela, Treasures and hospital made pads were used.

Of the pads used the ones women indicated as being the most effective for leaking milk were Pidgeon, and Johnson and Johnson breastpads, while Lanowool breastpads were regarded as the most effective for sore nipples, warmth and comfort. The qualitative comments made by some women explained why they considered some breastpads more effective than others. One of the main comments was that while some of the disposable pads prevented leakage of milk, e.g. Pidgeon, especially when the woman had a large supply, they were costly and often stuck to the woman's nipples thus increasing damage, and the possibility of infection. The cost of disposable breastpads that were not absorbent was also a factor in choosing which to use.

*[With my] first child – [I] used both wool pads and Pidgeon breastpads. Wool pads [were] best for mastitis, Pidgeon [were] best for leaking.*

*I used Pidgeon and washable cloth pads initially to control leakage and then switched to the Lanowool after 8 weeks*

*Lanowool hold leakage better than Treasures and possibly Johnson & Johnson, but not as well as Pidgeon (which I felt more confident with). J & J tended to go hard when filled while Pidgeon stayed soft. The Lanowool was conforming to the shape of the breast, which was comfortable, but tended to be a bit itchy when I got hot. Lanowool are good in the sense of lasting wash after wash.*

*I first used Treasures and Johnson nursing pads. They didn't work very well ;they'd leak and I'd go through a box of 24 in only a few days. So it ended up costing around \$14 a week which soon adds up.*

*The disposable pads helped absorb milk. However I found they often stuck to my nipples and hurt to remove.*

*[I] appreciated that they [Lanowool] didn't stick like disposable pads do.*

*[I] found that Pidgeon and Johnson & Johnson stuck to my nipples when drying, slipped around despite [having] adhesive to [fix to the] bra whilst feeding; [they] had to be changed up to 3 x daily.*

One woman did not seem to find any of the breastpad brands to be perfect:

*Johnson & Johnson were great but [they] needed to [be] replaced often. Lanowool did not work at all [for leaking milk].*

Another woman had the opposite view about the two types of breastpads she used:

*Lanowool leaked milk badly – [I] had to discontinue [their use]. Johnson & Johnson worked much better.*

### **The effectiveness of Lanowool breastpads**

Those who found Lanowool pads to be most effective made the following comments about their effectiveness for each reason used.

#### **Sore nipples**

*I have found the Lanowool breastpads fantastic. They are comfortable, easy to wash. Your sore nipples don't stick to the pads and they are cost saving in the long run. My friend raves about Lanowool pads and now I can too. I have also recommended them to other mums.*

*[They] stopped nipples rubbing on the bra...*

*[When I started using Lanowool] almost immediately, within 2 days, my nipples had healed.*

*[Lanowool pads provided] wonderful comfort on sore nipples starting to split –[I used them] as preventative.*

*They were softer on the skin and 'healing wounds – didn't stick to them like to other pads- reopening them with each feed or change.*

*Lanowool have been outstanding. Excellent absorption; do not stick to nipples; feel dry.*

*[Lanowool pads were] absolutely fantastic. I noticed a huge difference when I stopped using Lanowool. The prickling returned, my nipples dried out, and [{} definitely didn't feel confident going out without them on.*

### **Stopping leakage**

*I have large breasts (E cup when first feeding) and found the large Lanowool pads most comfortable and less visible through clothes. I have 3 pairs which alternate after every feed. I find it much more cost effective. In the early days of feeding I wear 2 pairs to stop leakage.*

*Lanowool pads were good at absorbing milk and keeping nipples soft.*

*They worked well, except I had to change them too often.*

*With all breastpads I used I still leaked ++, at each feeding from the opposite breast. Lanowool was best with double layer of pad [2 pads]. However, without applying pressure to [the] breast while feeding on [the] other side I leaked through [the] double layer of pad, bra, top and onto baby.*

*[Lanowool provided] superb comfort, warmth and small amounts of leaking milk, helped prevent mastitis. When leaking a lot in [the] early weeks, [I] used a “paper” breastpad on top of Lanowool next to bra.*

*[Lanowool] contained the milk in the pad – saved [me] embarrassment in public.*

### **Keeping nipples warm**

Warmth was important for a number of women but particularly those who had nipples that blanched in the cold (Raynaud's syndrome).

*Lanowool pads excellent for keeping breasts and nipples warm. I found with baby #1 I got chilblains in my nipples which were very painful. I have poor circulation due to Reynauds syndrome, and got chilblains on my toes during 2<sup>nd</sup> pregnancy (familial problem).*

*Lanowool were the only ones that kept [my] nipples warm when I had leaked. An added bonus!*

*Lanowool] kept my breasts warm. The sensitivity from being touched by people decreased dramatically.*

*They seemed to help with the flow of milk and kept my breasts warm and they had great absorbency.*

*[Lanowool pads were] absolutely fantastic. I noticed a huge difference when I stopped using Lanowool. The prickling returned, my nipples dried out, and [I] definitely didn't feel confident going out without them on.*

*[Lanowool] absorbed milk away from [the] nipples and kept them warm, [and provided] another layer of warmth between nipple and bra.*

*I live in Dunedin and due to the cooler climate, the Lanowool provides warmth and insulation against the cool elements. I do wish I had heard about them sooner. The Lanowool pads are an excellent product and I recommend them to everyone.*

### **Comfort**

*I've just received the Lanowool nursing pads and I love them, they are soft and comfy, also very discrete – the other brands make your breast look raised and uneven.*

*Lanowool pads are by far the best I've used as disposable ones didn't even last 5 minutes. For those of us who have a good supply of milk, Lanowool are great. Even though I normally have a skin rash if in direct contact with wool, the Lanowool pads caused no rash or irritation. In fact the skin the pad covered was silkier and softer after only 2-3 days use – no smell either and no 3-5 times changing tops!! Great. Have already recommended them to others.*

*They were softer on the skin and 'healing wounds – didn't stick to them like to other pads- reopening them with each feed or change.*

*I find Lanowool pads to be very comfortable- I find my nipples don't itch. I guess that's because the moisture is being drawn away.*

### **Preventing mastitis**

*I have only used the pads for 4 days and have not had sore nipples or blocked ducts. Previously I would get one or the other every few days.*

*To help milk start; to prevent infection and to absorb plentiful excess.*

However, despite the positive comments about Lanowool pads, some respondents were disappointed with the product and made the following comments, in relation to issues of absorbency, shape, effect of wool on their skin, odour retention:

### **Not sufficiently absorbent**

*Johnson & Johnson were great but [I] needed to replace [them] often. Lanowool did not work at all [for large amounts of milk].*

*I was extremely disappointed with them - \$20 buys several packets of disposable pads which work for me – I tried Lanowool several times and I ended up with [a] wet shirt and uncomfortable – Nothing worked as it stated on the packets- I would like to get a refund for these pads. I would be happy to send them back!*

*I don't find them to be very efficient on soaking up the milk from the other breast whilst feeding. I always wear Pidgeon when I'm out and Lanowool at home.*

*Lanowool pads were good at absorbing milk and keeping nipples soft. But I would probably still need another impervious pad to stop leaking through Lanowool pads onto clothes when producing lots of milk.*

*However, [Lanowool] are not very effective for leaking milk, especially overnight as there is no waterproof backing.*

*Lanowool very comfortable but leaking into clothing still occurs.*

*Johnson & Johnson [ pads are] used when I go out to prevent leaking.*

*I think in hindsight disposable [breastpads] were best as I didn't leak much but needed the protection and comfort of breast pads.*

*The only negative I found with the Lanowool pads would be for someone with a fast letdown, they didn't totally contain the milk leakage. Hence requiring more layers of clothing to prevent milk stains on outer clothing. Johnson & Johnson ones worked better for the above problem.*

*Unfortunately they[Lanowool] did not prevent the leaking milk – I have a strong and fast “letdown”.*

*[They were] fine. [I] only used one brand [Lanowool] and [it] didn't always stop leaking milk into clothes.*

*Pidgeon ones were fantastic for leaks. Lanowool not very good for leaks but great for comfort.*

*The Lanowool pads are great at absorbing moisture away from the breast but as a result they make your clothing damp where the breastpads sit,[they] not good for [use] during the day.*

*The pads were good for small leaks but I found they were not absorbent enough for leaking in the early morning i.e. after a long period not feeding.*

### **Irritating on skin**

*They[Pidgeon] helped absorb the milk and the Lanowool ones aggravated my nipples as I am allergic to wool and didn't think about it at first.*

### **Odour retention**

*[I] did find them difficult to wash- to get milk and colostrum out in lukewarm water and no detergent.*

*The lanowool breastpads are good in the aspect that they absorb the leaks and don't feel uncomfortably wet. I do find that they smell a bit and I wash them every day. It's worse if I don't.*

### **Shape**

*[For my] third baby [I] used Lanowool, no wetness/sogginess but they felt bulky.*

*I don't like the flat shape – they press my nipples in. I wish they were more rounded. Also, they don't make a smooth shape if you want to wear more fitting tops.*

*J & J were shaped but still uncomfortable. Medela were quite nice and comfy, great how they drew milk away from the body but expensive because they are disposable*

Some women made additional comments about the shape of the Lanowool pads, suggesting some improvements, or information that could be added to a leaflet about their use:

*Lanowool needs to be shaped to contour of the breast for comfort.*

*Good/average for leaking milk. Not good for sore nipples together with Lansinoh crème.*

The Lanowool breastpads were recommended to the respondents primarily by personal contacts, such as their midwife (n=49/120;40.8 %), a friend (n=37/120;30.8 %), a lactation consultant (n= 11/120;9.2 %), an antenatal class/educator (n= 17/120; 14.2 %). Other means by which women heard of Lanowool breastpads were public advertising as on the internet, in the local press, the radio, a midwives journal and a sample on a noticeboard (n= 15/120; 12.5%), family members (5/120;4.2%), nurses at well child services and a maternity hospital (6/120;5%), from a colleague at work (n=1/120;0.83%). One woman also indicated she had heard about Lanowool pads from her doctor.

### **Conclusions**

On the whole, women who participated in the survey were very satisfied with the Lanowool breastpads but a number of constructive comments were made about the pads which can be used for improvement of the product.

The following provides a summary of the findings from the breastpad survey:

- Most women who use Lanowool breastpads tend to hear about them primarily from their midwife, a friend or antenatal education classes
- These women tend to be older, have had one or more children, and generally have some tertiary education
- The two main reasons why women in this survey used breastpads was to prevent leaking of milk, and for sore nipples
- Secondary reasons for using breastpads are to keep the nipples and breasts warm and for comfort. Women have suggested that the keeping of breasts warm promotes milk flow and thus reduces the incidence of mastitis. Some women also mentioned having the problem of Raynaud's syndrome for which they found the Lanowool pads most effective.
- Many women using Lanowool breastpads did not find them very effective when used for a very large milk supply with a strong letdown reflex, or when used when going out during the day, and at night when feeds were less frequent.
- Pidgeon and Johnson and Johnson breastpads were suggested as being more absorbent and thus more effective for managing leaking breasts.
- There were some concerns about the need for regular washing as the Lanowool breastpads tended to smell especially if the breasts leaked a lot.
- The shape seemed to be a problem for a few women who felt they were bulky and not sufficiently contoured when they wanted to wear more fitting clothes. However the large size was suggested by one woman as being less visible through clothing.
- One woman experienced problems with itchiness due to a wool allergy.

## **Recommendations:**

1. An information leaflet could be designed for mailing with the Lanowool pads and posted on the website to give prospective and current users information about
  - The use and care of Lanowool pads when managing a large milk supply
  - The use of Lanowool pads when one has a wool allergy or eczema.
  - The size and number of pads recommended for purchase for specific issues.
2. The manufacturers of the Lanowool breastpads could consider ways of contouring them to reduce additional bulk and lines when tighter clothes are worn. This is especially important for younger women who are a potential group to whom this product can be marketed.
3. Marketing could focus on the main reasons for using the Lanowool breastpads with particular emphasis on the prevention and healing of sore nipples, for comfort and warmth particularly in colder areas. The marketing of these breastpads to women with a large milk supply and strong letdown reflex is also important as leaking breasts tends to be the main reason why women use breastpads.

## **References:**

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- Ministry of Health & NZHIS (2004). *Report on Maternity Maternal and Newborn Information*. Wellington: MOH.

## **Summary report on the breastpad survey undertaken on behalf of Lanowool owner, Lene Alexanderson**

### **Introduction**

Currently a number of different companies produce and market breastpads including Avent, Medela, Pidgeon, and Lanowool. What is it that makes one product superior to another? Is it purely women's preference or does the product have a therapeutic effect that makes the purchase thereof worthwhile?

Lanowool is one of the breastpads that has become increasingly popular over the last few years and a survey was undertaken to determine which breastpads women use, the main reasons why they use them including problems women have encountered during the use, of the specific breastpads.

### **Method**

A 3 page self-report, predominantly fixed choice questionnaire was designed and sent out, with a self-addressed reply paid envelope, with each purchase of a set of Lanowool breastpads. The questions included demographic information as well as reasons for use of breastpads, which pads were used, and which were the most effective.

In total 200 surveys were to be mailed out with a 60% return rate.

### **Results**

The following provides a summary of the findings from the breastpad survey:

- Most women who use Lanowool breastpads tend to hear about them primarily from their midwife, a friend or antenatal education classes
- These women tend to be older, have had one or more children, and generally have some tertiary education
- The two main reasons why women in this survey used breastpads was to prevent leaking of milk, and for sore nipples
- Secondary reasons for using breastpads are to keep the nipples and breasts warm and for comfort. Women have suggested that the keeping of breasts warm promotes milk flow and thus reduces the incidence of mastitis. Some women also mentioned having the problem of Raynaud's syndrome for which they found the Lanowool pads most effective.
- Many women using Lanowool breastpads for a very large milk supply with a strong letdown reflex, found them to most effective when used with another breastpad with which helped increase absorbency.
- There were some concerns about the need for regular washing as the Lanowool breastpads tended to smell especially if the breasts leaked a lot.
- The shape seemed to be a problem for a few women who felt they were bulky and not sufficiently contoured when they wanted to wear more fitting clothes. However the large size was suggested by one woman as being less visible through clothing.
- One woman experienced problems with itchiness due to a wool allergy.

Overall the respondents were very positive about the Lanowool pads.