

Information on feeding your baby – for pregnant women with diabetes

Maternity Department
Patient Information Leaflet



Accredited as
Baby Friendly by

unicef 

Introduction

During your pregnancy, you will be given the opportunity to discuss feeding your baby with your health professional. This usually starts at the booking visit and continues throughout your pregnancy. This is to ensure you have all the information you need before deciding how you will feed your baby.

I have diabetes, can I breastfeed my baby?

If you take metformin tablets for diabetes, you can breastfeed your baby.

If you are taking any other tablets for diabetes, you should discuss this with your diabetic team.

If you use insulin for diabetes, insulin does not pass into the breast milk so you can breastfeed your baby. However:

- You will need to monitor your blood glucose (sugar) levels carefully.
- You may need to eat more carbohydrates. Please speak to your diabetic nurse if your blood glucose levels are low.
- You may need to eat while you are breastfeeding (at the same time).

Why is breastfeeding important?

It is recommended that you **exclusively** breastfeed your baby for the first six months (only give them breast milk), then continue alongside solid foods for one to two years:

“As a global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complimentary foods while breastfeeding continues for up to two years of age or beyond.”

(WHO 2003)

Breastfeeding provides many health benefits and it helps you and your baby to build a strong bond. Exclusive breastfeeding gives the maximum benefits to mother and baby.

Benefits to baby

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of:

- Allergies
- Asthma and eczema
- Diabetes
- Ear infections
- Gastroenteritis (upset tummy)
- Urine infections
- Chest infections
- Obesity
- Heart disease
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

Benefits to mother

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of:

- Osteoporosis (weak bones) and hip fractures in later life
- Ovarian and breast cancer

Other benefits:

- Helps you to return to your pre-pregnancy weight.
- Can delay or reduce the likelihood of getting type 2 diabetes in later life in women with who had gestational diabetes (diabetes when they are pregnant).
- For any diabetic women using insulin, the breastfeeding hormones and the extra energy used during feeding may decrease the amount of insulin you require.
- Many mothers report increased feelings of well-being during breastfeeding.

Skin-to-skin contact

Having skin-to-skin contact with your baby, and feeding them early on, can mean that breastfeeding is likely to be more successful and continue for longer. Skin-to-skin contact can help to keep your baby warm and maintain their temperature.

What about after the birth of my baby?

It is normal for all babies to have a drop in their blood glucose in the first hours after birth. To help maintain normal blood glucose levels for your baby, it is recommended that you breastfeed within the first hour.

During this feed, your baby will receive colostrum. Every pregnant woman makes milk for her baby which is ready and available at birth. The milk produced during the first few days is called colostrum and is sometimes a yellow colour. Colostrum is a very valuable source of nutrition for your baby.

Your baby's first blood glucose level will be checked when they are three hours old. We do this by taking a small sample of blood from your baby's heel. We will give you a result straight away. This check will be performed before each feed, until your baby's glucose level has been normal three times in a row. You should offer your baby a feed at least every three hours during the first 24 hours.

Sometimes your baby needs to have extra calories and we will advise you to hand express some colostrum as well as breastfeeding. Hand expressing is a skill that will be taught to you before you give birth by a health professional. It is a way of using your hands to obtain some breast milk to give to your baby.

If your baby does not breastfeed, and you are unable to express any breast milk, your consultant may advise you to give your baby some formula milk.

After 24 hours, your baby's blood glucose level is unlikely to drop. However, if the levels are persistently low, your baby may need to go into the neonatal unit. Staff there will continue to encourage you and your baby to breastfeed and/or give your baby breast milk if you have expressed any.

How do I express milk by hand?

If you have decided to breastfeed, or want to give your baby breast milk, you can hand express and collect your colostrum. Hand expression can be started from 36 weeks of pregnancy and can also be performed after the birth of your baby.

The best time to hand express is when you have a shower or bath as the warmth encourages colostrum to flow. A calm, relaxed environment will also help colostrum to flow.

It is a good idea to start expressing milk for just a few minutes on both breasts and gradually increase the minutes you spend expressing each day. This should not hurt or cause labour to start. Consult your midwife if you have any concerns.

How to express colostrum by hand:

- Have a sterilised container to express your colostrum into. This could be a cup, spoon or syringe.
- Massage your breast briefly before you begin.
- Make a 'C' shape with your thumb and forefinger and place them two to three centimetres from your nipple (see figure 1).
- Gently press in and release in this area. It may take a little time for colostrum to start flowing, and you may need to adjust your fingers.
- When the colostrum stops coming out, move your fingers to a different area.

Sometimes practising this can help and you will soon be rewarded.



Figure 1 shows hand expression of colostrum

There are more details on how to hand express in the 'Off to a best start' leaflet given to you in your booking pack (see 'Can I find out more?' section). You can also discuss hand expression with a health professional.

Your hand expression pack:

You can obtain a hand expression pack from the antenatal clinic at the hospital, or ask a health professional.

The pack includes:

- Syringes
- A plastic cup
- Medicine spoons
- Labels

How do I collect and store my colostrum?

When you express colostrum, draw the drops up into a syringe or express into a sterilised container. You will need to store this in the fridge if you are going to use it that day, or freeze it straight away if not.

If you are collecting colostrum several times during a day, freeze whatever you are not going to use that day. During pregnancy, you can express up to three times in the same day. Always label the containers with the date and time of the collection (Butler and Upstone, 2012).

Do not add freshly-expressed colostrum to other colostrum that has been stored in the fridge or freezer. Use a new container.

Never store colostrum in the door of the fridge – storing it low down towards the back of the fridge is best. NICE (2008) recommend the following storage guidelines:

Storage guidelines for expressed milk (NICE, 2008)

| Where | Temperature | Time |
|-------------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Fridge | 0-4 degrees | 5 days |
| Freezer compartment of fridge | Not given | 2 weeks |
| Freezer | -18 degrees | 6 months |

To defrost colostrum, thaw in the fridge and then use immediately.

When you come into hospital for the birth of your baby, bring your stored colostrum, labelled with your name, date and time of expression, in a cool bag with ice packs. There is a freezer to store your colostrum on the maternity unit.

If you have not been able to express colostrum before you give birth, a health professional can help you in hospital.

How do I feed my baby with a cup?

Cup feeding allows you to feed your baby without using a bottle and teat. Your baby will lap the milk from the cup and this helps to avoid nipple-teat confusion. You could also use a medicine spoon to give your baby expressed milk.

Follow these steps to cup feed your baby safely (Newman, 2009):

- Ensure your baby is awake and alert before starting the feed
- Pour some milk into a small cup
- Hold your baby close and upright on your lap, supporting your baby's head
- Hold the cup to your baby's lower lip and bring small amounts of milk slowly to their mouth. Allow your baby to take the milk into their mouth with their tongue (see figure 2)
- Go slowly, your baby will continually lap the milk

Do not pour the milk into your baby's mouth.



Figure 2 shows a baby being fed from a cup

Can I find out more?

For more information about breastfeeding, you can go to:

The antenatal breastfeeding/Mom2Mom workshop

This is held every Thursday evening at 7pm to 9pm at Russells Hall Hospital in Maternity Outpatient Department.

We also hold the following:

Grandparents' evening

This covers a range of information including feeding. This is held on the first two Mondays of each month at 7pm to 9pm.

You can book either of these by contacting community midwives on 01384 244358 (10am to 12noon, Monday to Friday).

Useful websites:

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

www.abm.me.uk

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

www.babyfriendly.org.uk

Breastfeeding Network

<http://breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>

La Leche League GB

<https://www.laleche.org.uk/node>

National Breastfeeding Helpline

<http://www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk/>

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

<http://www.nct.org.uk/>

Start4life

Off to the best start booklet:

http://www.nhs.uk/start4life/Documents/PDFs/Start4Life_Off_To_The_Best_Start_leaflet.pdf

References

Butler, K and Upstone, S (2012) *Information Leaflet Antenatal Expression of Colostrum*. Glasgow: La Leche League.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2008) *Maternal and child nutrition*. London: NICE. Available at:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph11>

Newman, J (2009) *Information Sheet Finger and Cup Feeding*. Toronto: International Breastfeeding Centre. Available at:

https://nbci.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5:finger-and-cup-feeding&catid=5:information&Itemid=17

World Health Organisation (2003) *Global strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*. Geneva: WHO. Available at:

<http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/9241562218/en/>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Specialist Midwife Infant Feeding on 01384 456111 ext. 3887 or ask the switchboard to bleep 5050 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/maternity/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

یہ کتابچہ آپ کو بڑے حروف کی لکھائی، سمعی صورت اور دیگر زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ برائے مہربانی فون نمبر 08000730510 پر رابطہ کریں۔