

# Breastfeeding while your baby is in hospital



# We've written this booklet as a guide to breastfeeding while your baby is at Southampton Children's Hospital (SCH).

Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for babies. If you have chosen to breastfeed your baby, you can continue to provide breast milk for them even when they are unwell. It's an important way for you to be involved in your baby's care while they are in hospital.

Whether you are breastfeeding only or breastfeeding in addition to formula milk and/or solid foods, we can support you in a number of ways. In this booklet we'll explain more about the services available to you and answer some common questions.



## Contents

	page
<b>Where can I breastfeed in hospital</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Common problems</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Expressing and storing milk</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Helping your baby get used to breastfeeding</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Dummies</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Diet and lifestyle</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Further information</b>	<b>17</b>

## Where can I breastfeed in hospital?

Southampton Children's Hospital is a 'breastfeeding-friendly' hospital and is working towards accreditation with the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative. This means you are welcome to breastfeed and express anywhere in the hospital.

However, hospitals can be noisy and busy so you may value extra

privacy. There are parent rooms and breastfeeding rooms if you prefer to breastfeed or express breast milk in a quieter or more discreet place.

If you would like to or need to breastfeed at your child's bedside, pull the curtain around their bed to create a quieter and more private space. Make sure you have a comfortable chair and try to relax for a minute or two before starting to breastfeed.

# Common problems

Breastfeeding can be a wonderful experience but it can also come with a few challenges. We've listed some helpful advice for dealing with common breastfeeding problems. If you have any concerns, please speak to your medical or nursing team.

## Sore nipples

### Possible causes

- Thrush
- Incorrect latching onto the breast
- Not breastfeeding or expressing often enough
- Incorrect expression techniques
- Using a breast pump with a funnel that is too small
- Using a breast pump with a suction that is too high

### Advice

- Ask your pharmacist or GP for treatment for thrush
- Use nipple shields (you can purchase these from your local pharmacy)

- Discuss positioning and attachment with your nursing team or midwife
- Feed from the unaffected breast to give the affected breast time to heal. You should continue to express from the affected breast to maintain milk supply
- Try a different breast pump

## Poor milk supply

### Possible causes

- Not breastfeeding or expressing often enough
- Anxiety or stress
- Incorrect expression techniques
- Unhealthy eating and/or dehydration

### Advice

- Try to stay as calm as possible, during and between breastfeeds and expressions (this includes staying well-rested)
- Express about every 3 to 4 hours (6 to 8 times in 24 hours).
- Include more 'skin to skin' contact with your baby
- Speak to your medical team about trying galactagogue (such as domperidone)

## Engorgement of breasts (hot, painful, over full breasts)

### Possible causes

- Poor positioning and attachment (this can affect how efficiently and effectively milk is drained from the breast)

### Advice

- Breastfeed frequently
- Express frequently (about every three to four hours, six to eight times in 24 hours)
- Try resting heated pads or warm flannels over your breasts for pain relief, or have a warm bath or shower
- Try repositioning your baby, so that you relieve different milk ducts around the areola

## Speak to a dietitian or nurse if:

- you are at all worried about how your baby is growing
- your baby is struggling to bottle or breastfeed
- you have any other questions or concerns

They can put together a plan to support you and your baby.

# Expressing and storing milk

## Your baby may not be able to breastfeed in hospital if:

- they can't latch onto your breast
- they are unwell
- they have been born early

They may also need extra milk from a bottle or feeding tube.

In these cases, you can express your breast milk (squeezing milk out of your breast by hand or with a pump so you can store it).

Expressing allows you to provide your baby with breast milk even if they are not able to latch on to your breast.

## There are several benefits of expressing your breast milk:

- Your baby can still receive some breast milk and any amount of breast milk is better than none.
- Expressing maintains your milk supply if your baby is not able to feed often enough to maintain your supply themselves or if they require a different type of milk instead of breast milk during treatment.

- You can store your expressed breast milk so that it can be given to them on any occasions when you need to be away from them.

## How often should I express?

When your baby is in hospital, it can be a very stressful time. It's important to make sure you have plenty of time to relax and sleep. We recommend expressing approximately every three hours during the day and sleeping through the night, with one expression before you go to bed and one when you wake up. When your child is well and at home, expressing more frequently and at night can help to produce more milk.

**Tip: An empty breast makes milk faster than a full one, so expressing frequently produces more milk than expressing less frequently.**

## Should I express by hand or by pump?

Expressing milk by hand is a popular option with mothers but it can take a lot of practice. We have electric breast pumps available for you to use. If you would like to express using a pump, ask your medical or nursing team.

## Top tips for expressing

Ask your medical team to show you how to express.

## Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

- Always massage your breasts before expressing.
- Express until milk stops flowing and then express for another two minutes afterwards.
- 'Cluster' pumping (expressing by pump several times in a short period) can be done during the day, as this helps with milk production. However, make sure you don't 'cluster' pump and then leave a long gap between expressing the

next time, as this will reduce milk production.

- 'Double' pumping is when you express from both breasts at the same time. It can save time and also increases your milk supply and hormone levels.
- Skin-to-skin cuddles encourage the hormones which help you produce more milk. Try to express while (or shortly after) cuddling your baby.
- If you express away from your baby's bedside, have a photo of them with you.
- Try breast compression while expressing.

**Tip: Ask your nursing team or dietitian for individual advice on breastfeeding, Expressing can be hard, and we want to make it as easy for you as possible.**

## Choosing a breast pump

There are different breast pumps and funnels to suit different women. We can support you to make sure you are using the right equipment.

Some people choose to bring in their own breast pump, but you can also use the pumps we have available in the hospital. If you would like to use one of ours, please ask your nurse.

Ask for help to ensure the expression funnel on your pump is the right size for your breasts.

Each pump will have different settings which are designed to mimic the speed and strength of your baby's suck. You might want to start with a low suction level and gently increase it according to comfort. Over time, you will come to know what levels of suction help you express the most milk and are more comfortable for you.

## Avoiding contamination of breast milk

It is important to make sure your breast milk does not become contaminated when you express.

### To avoid contaminating your milk:

- wash your hands thoroughly before expressing
- have a daily bath or shower
- have a separate towel from the rest of family for drying your breasts
- avoid using soaps as this can dry the skin and nipples
- change breast pads frequently if you are using them,
- change your bra daily
- sterilise breast pumps before each use and store in a clean area
- use a sterilised expressing kit and bottles for each expression

## Storing expressed breast milk

You can store the breast milk you express and use it later. This means that even when you are not available to express, your baby can still benefit from your breast milk.

It is important that you adhere to strict hygiene standards to prevent this becoming contaminated. Always store the milk in a sterilised container.

### Storing breast milk in a fridge (at 4 degrees or lower)

In hospital, milk can be stored for up to 48 hours (24 hours in PICU).

At home, milk can be stored for up to 5 days.

### Storing breast milk in a freezer

Milk must be frozen within 24 hours of expressing.

Milk can be kept frozen for 6 months at home, or 3 months in hospital.

Defrost milk in the fridge. Once thawed, use it straight away.

**Tip: At home and in hospital, milk stored in the fridge or freezer should always be labelled with the date and time of expression. In hospital, you must also label the milk with your baby's name, date of birth and hospital number.**

Milk stored in a freezer or fridge in UHS must be labelled with your baby's name, date of birth, hospital number and the date and time of expression.

## Going back to breastfeeding after expressing

Expressing may not maintain your usual breast milk supply as effectively as your baby's sucking. When you start breastfeeding again after your baby's illness or surgery, frequent breastfeeds will increase your supply.

## Helping your baby get used to breastfeeding

The latest research suggests that early touch and exposure to voices are essential for a baby's development. The more time you can spend cuddling, massaging, talking and singing to your baby, the better.

**Tip:** Sometimes it is daunting to hold or cuddle your baby when they are ill (for example, if they have tubes or wires attached to them), so always ask the nurses for the best way to cuddle and handle your baby.

As part of your baby's care in hospital, there may be necessary procedures or treatments that involve their mouth. Some of these sensations may be unpleasant.

**For example, your baby may not like:**

- the taste of their medications
- unpleasant procedures around their mouth
- feeding differently to how they normally feed at home
- not being able to self soothe using their fingers or hands easily (for example if they have an intravenous cannula in their hand or arm or a feeding tube)

Unfortunately, these experiences are often unavoidable. Your baby may start to associate their mouth with unpleasant sensations. They may begin to develop a very sensitive gag reflex and touch aversion (not wanting to be touched around their head or mouth), which can affect how well they feed.

You can help provide your baby with positive experiences around their mouth. This will help to develop their feeding skills and help them to keep enjoying using the mouth.

Babies explore the world through their mouths, which helps their ability to tolerate increasing oral sensations. This can include chewing (also known as mouthing) on fingers, hands or toys. It is important to encourage your baby to bring their hands to their mouth. If they are fed with a tube you will need to be careful they don't accidentally pull it out.

Regular touch to your baby's mouth and lips is important. When you do this, it is important to pay attention to your baby's cues. Stop if your baby is not showing signs of enjoyment or if they are gagging. You may want to try stimulating further away from the mouth. For babies who are extremely sensitive around their mouth, it may be necessary to start with touch, stroking and massage far away from their mouth, such as on their hands, arms, feet or legs.

As your baby increasingly tolerates touch, you can start introducing them to different textures or pressures. For example, you can try using soft toys

or textured cloths and start massaging their hands and arms with more pressure. Bathing and dressing are also wonderful opportunities for providing sensory input.

**Tip:** Baby massage can be helpful. There may be parent and baby groups in your area that offer baby massage classes.

# Dummies

Babies have to learn how to drink and can quickly forget sucking skills used for breastfeeding or bottle feeding.

## A dummy can help to:

- develop your baby's mouth skills
- remind your baby how to suck while you're not breastfeeding them
- settle and comfort your baby
- create a positive feeling for your baby's mouth

It's completely your decision whether or not to use a dummy. No one in the hospital will give your baby a dummy without your permission. If you would like your baby to have a dummy to settle, you will need to bring in a minimum of six sterilised dummies to use. This is so that there will always be a clean dummy ready for your baby if the other dummy gets dirty or is dropped on the floor.

If you would like some advice, speak with your nursing or medical team.

If your baby seems to be having difficulty feeding, please ask to speak to a speech and language therapist and dietitian for extra support.

## Choosing a dummy

Any dummies you give your baby must meet the European safety guidelines.

- Dummies must be strong enough not to break into small pieces.
- Dummy guards or shields must be large enough that the entire dummy cannot be sucked into the baby's mouth.
- Dummy guards or shields must have holes in them so that your baby's nose does not get blocked when sucking on the dummy.
- Dummies should not have an attached cord or string as this can be a strangling hazard.

Old dummies can sometimes get damaged so make sure you check each dummy after sterilising them to make sure it is still safe for your baby.

## Dummy dips

Your baby may need to be 'nil-by-mouth' during their treatment. This means having no food or drink by mouth, either from a bottle or via breastfeeding. We will feed them milk through a small tube through their nose and into their tummy.

You can help your baby to get used to the taste of milk by giving them 'dummy dips'.

A dummy dip is when you give your baby a dummy to suck that has been dipped in their usual milk. The dummy should be coated in milk, but not dripping with milk. You can do this every two to three hours around the time your baby would have a feed.

Most babies who are being fed by tube can have dummy dips, but please check with your medical team first.

## Dummies and breastfeeding

Using a dummy should not have any negative effects on breastfeeding or how much breast milk you make. Studies have shown that babies who use a dummy are actually able to establish breastfeeding more quickly.

## When should my child stop having a dummy?

Try to stop using a dummy by the time your baby is 10 to 12 months. All children should stop sucking on dummies by two years of age. This is important for the health of their teeth, for normal jaw development and for learning to talk.

**Tip:** Ask for help if you are not sure about when or how to use a dummy.

## Diet and lifestyle

You don't need to make any special changes to your diet or lifestyle when breastfeeding your baby. However, having a sick baby can make you feel anxious and worried, so it is important to look after yourself.

- Make sure you are getting plenty of sleep. Before your baby came into hospital, you may have been advised to express once during the night, as this is when your milk producing hormones are highest. However, being tired can increase anxiety so it might be better to sleep through the night while they are in hospital.
- Keep a glass or bottle of water ready to sip on while you feed or express.
- To meet your energy needs, remember to have a sandwich or snack each time you breastfeed or express milk. Most women can eat their normal range of foods without causing problems for their baby, but we recommend keeping your caffeine intake to a maximum of four cups of tea or coffee per day.

### Vitamins for you

Everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, should take a daily supplement containing 10 µg (400IU) of vitamin D every day.

Vitamin D is made in the skin when we are exposed to sunlight and is important for bone health. It is very difficult to get enough vitamin D because the sun's rays are not very strong in the UK, particularly in winter. Taking a vitamin D supplement will also help your baby, as the vitamin D content of your breast milk will be higher.

Most people can get all the other vitamins and minerals they need by eating a varied and balanced diet. However, many breastfeeding mums choose to take a multivitamin.

If you are taking any medications or are concerned about them affecting your baby, please ask the nursing staff.

### Vitamins for your baby

If you are feeding your baby with breast milk (up to one year of age) they will need a daily supplement containing 8.5-10 µg (340-400 IU) of vitamin D.

If your baby has mixed feeding (breast milk and formula) they should also have a supplement.

If you are feeding your baby with formula and they are having less than, 500ml of formula per day, they will need to have vitamin D supplements. Your medical team may recommend extra supplements, depending on your baby's specific needs.

### Where can I get vitamins for myself and my baby?

You can buy vitamins from many supermarkets or health food shops. Some people are entitled to free prescriptions or the 'Healthy Start' scheme. Ask your medical team if you are not sure whether you are eligible.

### Further information and support

If you are having difficulties with breastfeeding or would like more information or support, please speak to your medical team. They can refer you to one of our specialists such as a speech and language therapist, breastfeeding and lactation specialist, dietitian or nurse.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

Version 1. Published December 2018. Due for review December 2021. 1940