

How to use syringes and cups to feed your baby

(from 32 weeks gestation)

Information for parents



Most babies are able to breastfeed from birth, yet some may require supplementation by syringe or cup – these methods have been linked to improved birth rates of eventual exclusive breastfeeding/chestfeeding. Formula can be used if it is clinically recommended or if this is your preference.

All midwives, healthcare support workers and the Lime Green Team healthcare support workers can help with skin to skin, hands-off hand expression, syringe and cup feeding, and should offer this as the first option if supplementation is needed.

Syringe feeding



- From birth to day 3, or for small amounts of colostrum (no more than 0.2ml given at a time) use a 1ml disposable purple feeding syringe; ensure that the plastic bung is removed before offering to baby to avoid choking or injury.
- First wash your hands and hand express colostrum. Use the electric pump if your baby is over 3 days old, or collect your pre-expressed milk from the fridge. Formula may be used if clinically required – staff will have a discussion about risks and benefits if you choose to use formula. If the amount of milk is more than 5mls, move to cup feeding to avoid the risk of aspiration.
- Wrap your baby in a towel and sit them upright; maintain good eye contact to aid bonding and baby's brain development.
- A member of staff will first demonstrate the technique so you feel confident. Gently stroke the syringe down over your baby's top lip to encourage rooting and mouth opening.
- Place the syringe between your baby's cheek and lower gum and push the plunger gently so your baby drinks a little at a time (0.1-2ml).

Cup feeding



- Ideal from day 3 OR quantities over 5mls.
- Only put 5-10mls of milk in the cup at a time, and refill when baby has drank the milk – there is no limit to the volume given by cup during the overall feed.
- Wrap your baby in a towel. Support your baby to sit in an upright position on your lap; maintain good eye contact to aid bonding and baby's brain development.
- A member of staff will first demonstrate the technique so you feel confident.
- Gently rest the rim of the cup on your baby's lower lip – allow the milk to come UP TO the edge of the cup.
- Direct the rim of the cup towards the corners of baby's lip allowing your baby to lap the milk with their tongue – **milk should never be poured into baby's mouth.**
- Leave the cup in place to allow your baby to take what they want in their own time – a cup feed should take around 30 minutes.
- Finally, wash the cup in hot soapy water and then sterilise the cup before the next use.

Responding to your baby



- Supplements should be offered to babies in a respectful and responsive manner.
- Supplementation amounts for a healthy, term baby may differ per feed and should reflect the normal amounts of colostrum available, the size of the infant's stomach (which changes over time), the age and size of the infant.
- Based on the limited research available, suggested intakes for term healthy infants are: **Day 0** (up to 24 hours) - 2-10 ml/per feed; **Day 1** - 5-15 ml/per feed; **Day 2** - 15-30 ml/per feed; **Day 3** - 30-60ml/per feed; **Day 5** - 30-60ml/per feed - but feeding should be by infant cue to satiation.
- The maternity team aim to address queries about your feeding plan, or listen to concerns and act as required – please use your call buzzer whilst in hospital, or phone the Sherwood Birthing Unit at evenings and weekends on 01623 672244.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

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