

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Helping you to exclusively breastfeed

When you want to breastfeed it is advisable to avoid using anything that replaces a breastfeed or the use of breastmilk. This leaflet is to help you understand why and what effect this may have on breastfeeding.

Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet because we would like to support your decision to breastfeed, and a big part of helping you is to avoid using any formula milk.

Why is it so important to avoid giving formula milk?

Breastfeeding works much better when you only give your baby breastfeeds; this is known as exclusively breastfeeding.

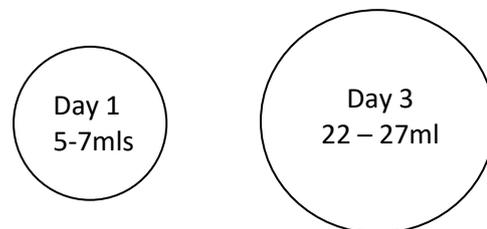
Stomach size

At birth and for the first three days, your baby's stomach is very small, about the size of a marble. When your baby feeds at the breast they get colostrum – the first milk – and this is provided in compact but nutritious feeds of about 5-7ml. This is the perfect amount for your baby.

This milk provides your baby with all the energy they need, as well as boosting their immune system with antibodies. Because it is provided in a small volume, it also avoids filling them with lots of extra fluid and allows their immature kidneys to adapt slowly to life outside your tummy.

Your milk supply will begin to increase around day three, and along with this your baby's stomach will now be bigger and ready to handle larger volumes.

Your baby's stomach size



Giving formula to your baby before their stomach has naturally grown causes them to be fuller quicker and for longer, as their body takes longer to digest the formula milk. This may decrease their eagerness to feed and lead to missed breastfeeds, which can signal to your body to slow down milk production.

Replacing breastfeeds

As mentioned, if you replace a breastfeed with formula it can send the wrong message to your body, and tell it not to make as much milk for future feeds because your body will learn to supply milk according to the amount your baby feeds. This could mean your baby is hungrier next time you feed them because milk was not removed from the breasts frequently and your body wasn't given the message to carry on producing.

There is also an increased chance your breasts may have milk left in them, causing them to become full and painful (engorged) and increases the risk of inflammation and infection in your breasts (mastitis).

Benefits

One of the amazing benefits of breastmilk is that it significantly reduces the risk of your baby getting allergies and infections.

One way it does this is that breastmilk seals the microscopic holes in the lining of your baby's gut; this prevents bacteria and potential allergens – such as cow's milk protein - passing through these gaps and entering your baby's body and triggering an immune response.

This response can increase the risk of your baby developing allergies in the future, even after just one feed of cow's milk.

Breastfeeding is all your baby needs

If your baby is not breastfeeding well, or is breastfeeding often, we can support you to learn to latch your baby to the breast or teach you to **hand express some colostrum**.

Sometimes, giving a little of your own milk will be enough to settle your baby, or give them more energy without the negative effects of using formula.

Skin to skin is one of the best ways to help your baby to feed, or may be perfect for making them feel secure and settled.

You can be reassured that you are providing the perfect amount of milk for your baby's needs at each stage of breastfeeding. It is perfectly normal for your baby's feeds to be frequent, clustered, short or long.

You are both still working it out – together. Be patient with each other and enjoy all the extra cuddles you are getting. Remember – it's normal.

Contact details

- **Infant Feeding Team** - 01623 676170.
- **Jenny Gilbert, Infant Feeding Midwife** - 01623 622515, extension 6483.

- **Midwives Advice Line** - 01623 676170.
- **Out of hours** - 01623 655722.

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.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202105-02-HYEB
Created: June 2019 / Revised: May 2021/ Review
Date: May 2023