

Infant feeding when a mother has a raised BMI (body mass index)

This leaflet explains the benefits of breastfeeding for women with a raised BMI (body mass index) with the aim of encouraging you to breastfeed your baby.

Why is it so important to choose to breastfeed?

The Department of Health (DH) and World Health Organisation (WHO) recommend that all women should breastfeed exclusively for six months, and continue for up to 2 years, as this is proven to be healthier for both you and your baby. Breastfeeding will prevent your baby becoming overweight in the long term and will help you lose any extra weight gained during pregnancy.

Benefits of breastfeeding for your baby:

- Breast milk contains nutritional and many protective factors which will reduce the risk of diarrhoea and vomiting, chest, ear and urine infections.
- Reduces childhood obesity as research suggests.
- Reduces the risk of Type 1 diabetes in childhood.
- Supports growth and development.

Benefits of breastfeeding for you:

- Helps shift extra weight put on during pregnancy.
- It helps your womb return to normal more quickly.
- Reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer in later life.
- Lowers the risk of miscarriage, premature birth and still birth in subsequent pregnancies.
- Reduces the risk of brittle bone disease (osteoporosis).
- Helps you bond with your baby.



Breastfeeding and raised BMI

Even though research by Amir and Donath (2007) shows that healthy mothers with a BMI higher than 35 may struggle to produce as much milk as other healthy mothers, with the right support by the health professionals this is easily overcome. The following information offers some advice to increase your chances of breastfeeding successfully.

Support whilst you are pregnant

You will be invited to attend an informal session on infant feeding during your pregnancy. Bring your partner along and find out together about caring for your newborn baby. The sessions are designed to give you information to help you make an informed choice about feeding your baby. If you choose to attend and have any outstanding questions, you can ask then or speak with your antenatal or community midwife. You will find the dates and venues at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/infant_feeding.htm.

To overcome potential problems and avoid formula supplements (see “The possible effects of offering formula milk to a breastfeeding baby” leaflet) it is possible to express and save colostrum from 36 weeks. Please ask your midwife about this when you next have an antenatal appointment and read “Hand expressing colostrum when pregnant” leaflet, which you can find by visiting www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/infant_feeding.htm (Maternity information).

Skin to skin contact

Skin to skin contact is important for all women regardless of how you feed your baby. It helps you to bond with your baby and has many benefits for your both, (ask for a skin to skin leaflet, for further information). Ensure your baby is placed on top of your breasts, (near your collar bone) with the mouth and nose clear to ensure he can breathe easily. You can breastfeed or give formula feeds in skin contact.

Support with infant feeding

When you have had your baby please ask for support to help you position and attach your baby to the breast. It is useful to explore a variety of positions so you and your baby can achieve comfortable feeds.

Read ‘Off to a Best start’

(www.unicef.org.uk/documents/Baby_Friendly/leaflets/otbs_leaflet_pdf), watch some videos on feeding, using the baby friendly website (www.babyfriendly.org.uk/parents/audiovisual) and Global Health Media “Attaching my baby” found on YouTube. All of these will give you information about latching on.

Most importantly, seek support following the birth, from members of



the staff. If you have more challenging problems with feeding, you can ask to see one of the infant feeding team who will be more than happy to assist you. When you go home you will be given a list of clinics at various points around West Berkshire where you can access further support, should you need it.

Eat a healthy diet while breastfeeding

It is important to eat a healthy balanced diet during the period you are breastfeeding as this will provide the necessary nutrients and vitamins, from you to your baby. This is not a time to diet but it could be a time to improve what you are eating. A varied diet is a healthy diet. Excessive intake of one particular food will affect the baby in the same way it affects you. A good idea of how much weight to put on during pregnancy is around 2-2½ stone or 12-15kg.

- For a healthy diet you will need to eat a mixture of proteins, carbohydrates, calcium, fruit and vegetables.
- Try to eat less processed food and eat more freshly-prepared meat and vegetables. This way you can ensure your baby will get all the nutrition needed to grow into a healthy infant.
- Red meat, spinach and other dark green vegetables, dried apricots are good sources of iron.
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and oily fish are good forms of calcium.
- Carbohydrates such as bread, potatoes and pasta are all good foods for providing energy.
- Lean meat, chicken, nuts and pulses are good sources of protein.
- A variety of fresh fruit and vegetables will provide yourself and your baby with all the vitamins and minerals needed. The Department of Health recommends five portions of fruit or vegetables a day.
- Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of water each day.
- Continue to take Vitamin D supplements while you are breastfeeding to help prevent bone malformations (rickets).
- Try and exercise daily, take long walks and get fresh air regularly.

References

1. CMACE /RCOG (2010) Joint Guideline; Management of Women with Obesity in Pregnancy March 2010
2. Amir, L H and Donath, S (2007) A Systematic view of maternal obesity and breastfeeding intention, initiation and duration. BMC Pregnancy Childbirth, 2007 Jul 4; 7:9
3. Department of Health (2004) Standards for better Health Available online www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsand_statistics

4. World Health Organization (2013) Global strategy on Diet, Physical Activity & health. The role of parents. www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/childhood
5. Unicef Off to the Best Start
www.unicef.org.uk/documents/Baby_Friendly/leaflets/otbs_leaflet.pdf
6. YouTube Global Health Media Attaching my baby video series
7. Breastfeeding Network BfN www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
8. Hand expressing colostrum Maternity Information leaflet
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/infant_feeding.htm
9. The possible effects of offering formula milk to a breastfeeding baby Maternity Information Leaflet www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/infant_feeding.htm

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Author: Florence Makinde, Midwife ANC/DAU, September 2013

Department: Maternity

Reviewed: Revised March 2014, June 2016, Aug 2018 (C Carter)

Approved: Maternity Information Group & Patient Information Manager, September 2018

Review due: September 2020