Parents leaflet

***When your new-born doesn’t latch***

***So, your baby hasn’t quite learnt how to breastfeed yet?***

In the first few days, some babies are sleepy or uninterested in feeding. This can be especially true for small babies, following a difficult labour or birth, or if you received drugs for pain relief during your labour.

A slow start to breastfeeding is not uncommon and in most cases you and your baby will soon get the hang of breastfeeding but it can take a few days or occasionally even a few weeks.

When breastfeeding is getting off to a slow start there are three important things to remember:

*√ Making sure that your breasts get plenty of signals to make milk.*

*√ Making sure your baby gets any milk that you express.*

*√ Giving your baby lots of opportunity to get familiar with your breasts and learn to breastfeed in a calm and unhurried atmosphere*

*Making sure that your breasts get plenty of signals to make milk.*

Because your baby is not yet feeding, you will need to stimulate your breasts for them to begin to make lots of milk.

Having your baby in skin to skin contact with you (holding your baby so that her bare skin is next to yours) is the best way to ensure milk production, it increases all the hormones responsible for breastfeeding and your baby is much more likely to feed if connected with you. You can hold your baby in skin to skin for a long period of time.

Nipple stimulation is important too. Gently roll your nipples between your thumb and finger. (Massaging the nipples will release the hormone Oxytocin) Try to do this as often as you can. It will feel strange at first but it will help in the longer term.

Hand expressing is also very useful. Not only will it stimulate your nipples and breasts but you will have the added bonus of expressing of colostrum. Any colostrum expressed can be given straight to your baby.

Hand expressing is a really useful skill, once learnt, it is very easy. We advocate you doing it to yourself rather than staff members, although it is something that perhaps your partner could help with.

We have leaflets and information on hand expressing or the staff can show you how

If you find hand expressing difficult, we also have electric breasts pumps that can be used from birth. You are very welcome to use one, please do ask.

*Making sure your baby gets any milk that you express.*

Please be reassured that your healthy baby born around term will have fat and sugar reserves. He or she can use these very efficiently. So, although we would *like* your baby to feed straight away, the first 24-48 hours he *needs* very little.

Any breastmilk or colostrum that you do express can be given straight away to your baby. This is so much better than being stored in the fridge.

Drops can be scooped up on your finger or dropped directly into your baby’s mouth.

Larger volumes can be given by syringe (usually up 5 mls)

More than this we would suggest either using a cup or a bottle to give the milk to your baby. All of this can be discussed with the staff caring for you but remember this is your decision and this is your baby.

As to how much milk you give to your baby, small amounts are fine but remember this volume should increase and your baby’s need for more will increase too.

*Giving your baby lots of opportunity to get familiar with your breasts and learn to breastfeed in a calm and unhurried atmosphere.*

Your baby will need to be kept close to you, we usually suggest in skin to skin contact. We know from experience and research that a baby held close, will be much more likely to learn how to breastfeed plus he or she will be comforted by this close contact. Early feeding cues can be responded to and feeding becomes less of a challenge.

It really does work. Try to not use the cot in those early hours and days.

During this time, it can be frustrating that you baby isn’t feeding. Breastfeeding can be difficult at first; it should be the most natural thing in the world but often quite challenging. Don’t be disheartened, have some patience and ‘listen’ to your baby. Watch his feeding cues and find out as much about breastfeeding as you can using our leaflets and guidance.

We try to guide and teach you using a ‘hands off’ approach, you know your own breasts and baby much better than we do. We can teach but you have to learn what feels right for your and baby, a new skill is always tricky at first.

**So, when to go home?**

It is usually a good idea to stay with us in hospital until you are beginning to establish breastfeeding. At least one feed would be great. However, we do acknowledge that this is a strange and unfamiliar place to be. So, if you are really keen to go home then remember to continue on this pathway until breastfeeding is established. Your Community Midwife will visit the next day. She is trained in all aspects of breastfeeding and will be able to support you and your baby.

There are local feeding groups and FB groups that are great sources of support and information as well as more National Websites etc…

Our Breastfeeding Team will happily help either over the ‘phone or face to face.

**Don’t give up too soon**

It is tough at the beginning but remember you are both learning. Learning any new skill can be difficult especially when you are tired and emotional. Seek as much support as you can be that professional support or a friend that has ‘been there too’.

All staff are fully trained in Breastfeeding Support and will always help. The Breastfeeding Team is based on the Postnatal Ward and can offer further support too.

Feeding number 07775 027151.