Breastfeeding Care Pathway

Your baby and you: Your breastfeeding journey  Feeding is important to the development of every baby. Effective care of all mothers and babies will help to ensure their future health and wellbeing. The Steps/Points referred to in this pathway reflect the World Health Organisation/UNICEF best practice for hospital (steps) and community health care settings (points). All hospital and community settings should have a breastfeeding policy (Step 1/Point 1) and frontline staff trained to implement the policy (Step 2/Point 2). When all Steps/Points are achieved by the hospital or community setting it is fully accredited.

Antenatal breastfeeding Care Pathway

Health and social care assessment for all pregnant women
Midwives should discuss whether pregnant women are eligible for Healthy Start vouchers and talk to them about accessing Healthy Start vitamins. It’s also a chance to discuss antenatal breastfeeding education sessions for mother/father or both.

One-to-one discussions on breastfeeding with midwife/health visiting team
This should include benefits and practical information as set out in the antenatal checklist (Step 3/Point 3).

Consider individual needs:

- Antenatal session on breastfeeding
- Discussion on Bump to breastfeeding video clips
- Information for parents about their local Children’s Centre

All pregnant women should know how to access the:
- ‘Bump to breastfeeding’ video clips
- Pregnancy book online* and Off to the best start leaflet*
- www.nhs.uk/breastfeeding
- information relevant to fathers and partners

*Available from www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets

Postnatal breastfeeding Care Pathway (in the hospital/birth centre/midwifery unit at home)

• All mothers should be offered skin-to-skin contact with their baby in an unhurried environment, for at least an hour after birth or until the first breastfeed.
• All mothers should be supported with their first breastfeed (Step 4/Point 4). If this is not possible then help with breastfeeding should be offered as soon as mother and baby are able.
• In the neonatal unit mothers and fathers with babies should be offered kangaroo care with their baby as soon as the baby’s condition allows.
• Mothers should be taught how to recognise their babies’ feeding cues and encouraged to feed their baby on demand (baby led) (Step 8/Point 4).
• Mothers should be offered further help with breastfeeding within six hours and shown how to position and attach their baby for breastfeeding (Step 5/Point 4).
• If separated from their baby, mothers should be shown how to express breast milk by hand and pump. Expressing should happen at least 8 times in each 24 hour period until the baby is able to breastfeed.
• Mothers and babies should be close together in the same room (Step 7/Point 4).
• Mothers are taught to recognise effective feeding and milk transfer, before transfer home into the community (Step 5).
• They should be encouraged to continue with skin-to-skin contact.
• Teats or dummies should not be offered to babies during the establishment of breastfeeding (Step 9).
• No other food or drink should be offered to the baby unless clinically indicated (Step 6/Point 5).
• Mothers should be shown how to recognise feeding cues.
• All breastfeeding mothers should be shown how to hand express their milk.

Early days onwards

- Midwives should assess the baby’s feeding, complete the breastfeeding assessment tool and give feedback to the mother, helping them recognise their baby’s feeding cues and effective milk transfer (Step 5/Point 4).
- Peer support should be offered where possible within 48 hours of transfer home or home birth.
- Your healthcare professional (midwife or health visitor) should review your breastfeeding experience each time you meet.
- Fathers and partners should also have the chance to discuss feeding with the midwife and health visiting team.

Parents should be able to access support from:
- the midwifery team in hospital and in the early days at home, the Family Nurse (where appropriate) and their health visiting team in delivering the Healthy Child Programme
- trained peer supporters
- breastfeeding drop-ins
- Children’s Centres
- Birth to five online and Start4Life leaflets*

*Available from www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets

Web links:
www.nhs.uk/breastfeeding
www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets
www.nhsla.com
www.nice.org.uk
www.babyfriendly.org.uk
www.nhs.uk/start4life

Mothers and babies who need individual support receive care as set out in the community policy: e.g. mastitis, tongue tie etc. Ask the Infant feeding coordinator/specialist midwife for support.

© Crown copyright 2010 403446 (3) (403686)