

**Breastfeeding
information
leaflet for
grandparents**

Especially for Grandparents

This leaflet provides the latest information about breastfeeding so you can help and support your daughter/in-law in her choice.

What's so good about breastfeeding – isn't bottle-feeding as good?

While babies survive happily on artificial milk, human milk is designed specially for human babies and has many advantages:-

- ❖ Breastmilk contains all the nutrients a baby needs during the first six months of life.
- ❖ Breastmilk increases the baby's resistance to infection and disease.
- ❖ Breastfeeding is one of the factors thought to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (cot death).
- ❖ Breastmilk is convenient and cheap. It's always available and is perfect food for a baby.
- ❖ Breastfeeding helps the mother's body to return to its pre-pregnant state more quickly. Your daughter/in-law may find that she can get back to her former weight more easily.
- ❖ Breastfeeding lowers the risk to the mother of developing some types of cancers and osteoporosis (brittle bones) in later life.
- ❖ Artificial milk is more difficult to digest, babies have smellier nappies and are

more likely to suffer constipation and colic.

- ✧ Babies fed on artificial milk suffer more tummy upsets, allergies, asthma and eczema and ear infections.
- ✧ Bottle-feeding is expensive – not only the formula, but also all of the equipment that goes with it.

What about routines?

Nowadays we give new mothers the opportunity to have uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact with their baby at birth. This encourages a close relationship and most babies will spontaneously breastfeed during this time.

Not long ago, new parents were encouraged to get their baby into a routine (usually four hourly) as soon as possible and leave the baby to cry 'to exercise their lungs' or risk spoiling him. Night-time feeds were discouraged and babies were often cared for in a nursery whilst in hospital.

We know that this is harmful to breastfeeding and was the cause of many new mothers giving up breastfeeding and turning to artificial milk. Night-time feeding is important in establishing a good supply of breastmilk so we now encourage mothers to keep their babies with them day and night.

Breastmilk is easily digested so babies need feeding frequently, often 8 - 10 times a day; some feed more, some less.

A mother's body adjusts the amount of milk available so the supply matches what her baby demands. Every feeding stimulates the body to make enough for the next feed.

Babies can't tell the time!

A baby should be allowed to feed as soon as he shows signs of hunger, crying is the very last sign of hunger. He should be left to feed until he comes off himself. Some babies will need both sides, some won't. He will know when he has had enough.

Baby-led feeding has many advantages, the mother's supply will match her baby's needs and she is less likely to get painfully overfull breasts.

What about sore nipples?

Breastfeeding shouldn't hurt although there is often some transitory soreness during the first week.

Incorrect attachment of the baby is the most likely cause of sore cracked nipples rather than the frequency or length of feeds.

Should your daughter/in-law find breastfeeding painful, encourage her to seek help and advice from her midwife, health visitor or a breastfeeding counsellor.

How can I help?

There are lots of ways you can help and support your daughter/in-law. Encourage her to take daytime rests. Maybe take your

grandchild for a short walk while she sleeps. Nappy changing, bathing or just cuddling can give her a break. Help with housework, maybe cook a meal for the freezer or just making a cup of tea and a sandwich will take the pressure off so she can concentrate on feeding.

New mothers can get very tired and sometimes forget to eat. Encourage her to eat regularly and have a balanced diet. Nothing special, just all things in moderation.

Can I give baby a bottle so mum can rest?

While offering to give the baby a bottle may seem helpful, it can undermine a new mother's confidence in her ability to breastfeed and can affect her milk supply. Also sucking on a bottle or dummy requires very different action to breastfeeding and is best avoided during the first few weeks as it may cause problems with breastfeeding.

It is also important to make her feel comfortable about feeding, give her privacy if that is what she wishes, but don't send her to another room if she is happy to breastfeed in company.

Does my grandchild need anything else?

Breastmilk is all a baby needs for the first six months and it's advisable not to introduce other foods or drinks before four months, as baby may not be able to

tolerate them. Even in hot weather there is no need to give extra drinks, baby will quench his thirst by having more frequent feeds.

Research shows that the feeding experiences of grandmothers have an effect on how their grandchildren are fed. Your support is vital. You can help your daughter/in-law by being positive and encouraging. Breastfeeding is a skill that both mother and baby need to learn. This may take several weeks.

Date issued: April 2002

Review date: April 2005

© [West Wiltshire Primary Care Trust](#)

WKJ 3597 WWPCT

RAP