

# 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

by 12 weeks

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

before 34 weeks

This should include benefits and practical information as set out in the antenatal checklist (**Step 3/Point 3**).

- 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](http://www.nhs.uk/breastfeeding)
- information relevant to fathers and partners

\*Available from [www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets](http://www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets)

### Consider individual needs:

At every stage, fathers and partners should also have the chance to discuss feeding with the midwife

Some women may need the opportunity to talk to the Infant feeding coordinator/specialist midwife for individual support

Factors which may trigger targeted support:

- multiple births
- diabetes
- breast surgery
- caesarean section
- social-economic factors
- teenage pregnancy
- Healthy Start recipients

Mothers who are bottle feeding with **infant formula** need to be shown how to prepare a bottle of infant formula correctly in order to minimise the risks.

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

- ### birth
- 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**).

- ### first 6 hours
- 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.

- ### early days onwards
- 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.

Mothers and their partners receive contact details for breastfeeding support, how to contact their midwife, their health visiting team, local breastfeeding group, and the **National Breastfeeding Helpline 0300 100 0212 (Step 10/Point 7)**.

Mothers and babies who need individualised support receive care as set out in the hospital policy: e.g. hypoglycaemia, reluctant feeders, jaundice etc. Ask the Infant feeding coordinator/specialist midwife for support.

## Postnatal breastfeeding Care Pathway (in the community)

- Mothers should be encouraged to have **skin-to-skin** contact, to **breastfeed on demand** (**Step 8/Point 4**), and keep their baby close to them (**Step 7/Point 4**). They should be offered **skilled assessment of feeds** by a skilled person to ensure feeds are comfortable, and effective (**Step 5/Point 4**).
- 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.

Midwives should assess the baby's feeding and give feedback to the mother.

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 teams** 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](http://www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets)

#### Web links:

[www.nhs.uk/breastfeeding](http://www.nhs.uk/breastfeeding)  
[www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets](http://www.nhs.uk/parenting-pamphlets)  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)  
[www.babyfriendly.org.uk](http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk)  
[www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)

Mothers who are bottle feeding with **infant formula** need to be shown how to prepare a bottle of infant formula correctly in order to minimise the risks.

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.