

Policy on Antenatal Expression of Colostrum

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff caring for expectant mothers at NHS Orkney understands their role and responsibilities in supporting expectant mothers to be given information about the benefits of breastfeeding for their own health and for that of their baby. This information will include how to get breastfeeding off to a good start and will include mothers being informed about the benefits of expressing small amounts of colostrum from 38 weeks gestation (unless contra-indicated) for supplementing their baby after birth should this be required.

The policy will guide staff on how to identify women who may want to express their colostrum antenatally, who shouldn't express their colostrum antenatally, when to advise women to start expressing their colostrum antenatally should they wish to do so, what resources and advice to give to women who want to express their colostrum antenatally, safe storage and labeling of colostrum both in the home environment and when admitted to the ward, the safe storage and transport of colostrum for women who are admitted to Aberdeen Maternity Hospital and how to prepare and support administration of colostrum to the baby, should this be required.

All staff are expected to comply with this policy.

Outcomes

This policy aims to ensure that the care provided improves outcomes for children and families, specifically to deliver:

- an increase in breastfeeding initiation rates
- an increase in breastfeeding rates at 10 days
- Increases in breastfeeding rates at 6-8 weeks ¹
- A reduction in the number of babies who are given formula milk supplementation in the early post-natal period as part of NHSO's commitment to the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative ²

¹ Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery plan' (2018) the Scottish Government has committed to the 'stretch aim' of reducing the drop off in breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks after birth by 10% by 2025

² Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative, Maternity Standard 4 - supplementation

Our commitment

NHS Orkney is committed to:

- Providing the highest standard of care to support expectant and new mothers and their partners to feed their baby and build strong and loving parent- infant relationships. This is in recognition of the profound importance of early relationships to future health and well-being, and the significant contribution that breastfeeding makes to good physical and emotional health outcomes for children and mothers.
- Ensuring that all care is mother and family centred, non-judgemental and that mothers' decisions are supported and respected.

As part of this commitment the service will ensure that:

- All new maternity staff are familiarised with this policy on commencement of employment.
- All staff receive training to enable them to implement the policy as appropriate to their role. New staff receive this training within three months of commencement of employment.
- The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes³ is implemented throughout the service.
- Accurate records are maintained for quality and safety.
- An audit is maintained that monitors how many women take an antenatal expressing kit, how many use the kit, how many breastfeed at birth and how many are breastfeeding at discharge and at 6-8 weeks.
- Parents' experiences of care will be listened to through: regular audit, parents' experience surveys, comment boxes sited within surgeries and clinics, patient feedback link on NHS Orkney webpage <https://www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk/contact-us>

Who may want to express colostrum antenatally?

All women, unless it is contraindicated should be given information at their 36 week clinic appointment about expressing their milk antenatally. This conversation should be recorded in the woman's record on Badgernet. They should be given an information leaflet about expressing their colostrum in addition to information about the value of breastfeeding and getting breastfeeding off to a good start. Should they decide that they would like to begin expressing their colostrum, information and guidance on hand expressing, collecting and storing their milk safely, including labeling should be given at their routine 38 week antenatal clinic appointment.

3 More information on the Code: <http://unicef.uk/thecode>

They should be given a colostrum expressing pack that contains 6 syringes, 6 colostrum labels (which have space for name, date of birth, date and time expressed and date when defrosted, a storage bag and written information on hand expressing and safe storage of expressed breast milk. They will also be advised on how to safely transport their frozen milk when coming in for delivery.

Who Should be advised NOT to express colostrum antenatally?⁴

Women who have known cervical incompetence

Women who have a cervical suture in situ

Women who have threatened or actual premature labour

Women who have a multiple pregnancy

Women who have polyhydramnios

Women who have had contractions, vaginal bleeding or premature rupture of membranes in current pregnancy.

When will women be advised to start expressing their colostrum?

Women will be advised that they can start expressing from 38 weeks gestation. They should be advised to undertake this just once or twice a day for a few minutes using hand expression, building up to no more than 5 times per day. Women will be advised that should they experience uterine contractions they should stop expressing immediately, rest and if the contractions do not stop within a couple of hours they should contact the Maternity Ward for advice.

What information and resources will women be given?

At their routine 36 week antenatal appointment, women will be given information about the benefits of breastfeeding and getting breastfeeding off to a good start. They will be given verbal and written information about antenatal expression of colostrum and how their milk can be used after delivery to feed their baby, should the baby require supplementation. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the patient information leaflet.

Should a mother wish to express her colostrum, she will be given further verbal and written information at her routine 38 week antenatal clinic appointment (Please see Appendix B for a copy of written information given on hand expressing, safe collection and storage of colostrum and how to transport your colostrum into hospital safely).

Women who wish to express their colostrum, will be given a colostrum expressing pack at their 38 week antenatal appointment. This will include a storage bag, six colostrum syringes, a pack of labels which include space to record the woman's name, CHI and date and time of expressing.

⁴ Scottish Infant Feeding Advisors Network (2018). Scottish Guidance on Antenatal Colostrum Harvesting.

How will women be advised to label and store their milk?

Women will be advised to wash their hands before starting to hand express their colostrum. They will be advised to collect their milk into the provided syringe. The same syringe can be used over that day provided it is stored in the back of the fridge between attempts as this is the cooler part of the fridge (maximum temperature 4°C). At the end of the day, women will be advised that they should label their colostrum by filling out all fields on the label and attaching it to the syringe and place it in the freezer for up to 2 weeks in the freezer compartment of a fridge or up to 6 months in a deep freezer (-18°C or lower).

How will women transport their milk into hospital

Women will be advised when coming into hospital to give birth they should transport their frozen, labelled colostrum in the sealed bag, well packed into a cool bag with frozen ice blocks or ice to maintain temperature.

Women will be advised to inform staff upon arrival to the Maternity Ward that they have their frozen colostrum so that this can be safely stored in the ward freezer until needed.

Safe Storage of colostrum in hospital

Upon receipt of the frozen colostrum, staff will place frozen, bagged colostrum into a clear bag which is clearly labeled with the woman's name, CHI and date of receipt. This will be stored until the woman transfers out of Orkney or until required.

If colostrum is required to supplement the woman's baby during the woman's stay on the ward, her milk will be removed and thawed gently before being offered to her baby in the syringe or in a cup.