Tips for breastfeeding a sick infant:

• Start breastfeeding within the first hour after birth. If this is not possible, begin expressing within 6 hours after birth and continue to express a minimum of 8 times per day.

• Engage in skin to skin contact as much as possible. Rooming-in with your baby is encouraged i.e., stay with your baby day and night.

• When your baby is well enough, put your baby to the breast as much as possible. Throw away the clock! If your baby is correctly latched and suckling at the breast he/she will come off when they are satisfied. When your baby is fully feeding at the breast, he/she should be having a minimum of 6-8 wet nappies/day and be gaining weight.

• It is important to remember that breast fed babies feed on demand and not according to a time schedule. When in hospital, babies often have a scheduled feed times, according to their medical needs. Once well and on full breast feeds, your baby will return to feeding on demand. This is not a sign of insufficient milk supply; breast milk is simply easier and more readily digested and hence baby may feed more often.

• Remember; always observe for feeding cues such as rooting, sucking hands, sighing noises and stretching. Never wait until your baby is screaming! It is much easier to latch a calm baby!

Should you encounter any difficulties:

• Do not hesitate to seek advice and support from the nursing and medical staff as soon as possible.

• We also have a series of fact-sheets available on the ward with information on how to deal with common problems encountered by breastfeeding mums;
  - Low Milk Supply
  - Latch and positioning
  - Common conditions encountered by breastfeeding mums i.e., engorgement, mastitis, thrush etc.
  - Seek support from La Leche League, Cuidiu, Friends of Breastfeeding and of course other mums can be a great source of advice and reassurance.

Developed by Caroline Tyrrell, Staff Nurse, IBCLC, St Peter’s Ward.

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On St Peter’s Ward, we encourage and support breastfeeding and we endeavour to make your breastfeeding experience with us as positive as it can be.

The World Health Organisation “recommends mothers exclusively breastfeed infants for the child’s first six months to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Thereafter, they should be given nutritious complementary foods and continue breastfeeding up to the age of two years and beyond”.

The advantages of breastfeeding are well-documented worldwide:

- Breastfeeding provides all the nutrients for healthy development
- It is readily available and economical and helps with the bonding relationship between mother and baby
- Breast milk contains antibodies that protect the child from common illnesses such as diarrhoea and pneumonia
- Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of allergies, ear infections and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Long term benefits include;
- Reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer, decreased risk of obesity and a return to pre pregnancy weight faster.
- Reduced incidence of Type 2 Diabetes, lower cholesterol levels and higher performances in intelligence

St Peter’s Ward Breastfeeding facilities:

You are welcome to stay with your baby while they are an inpatient on St Peter’s. We have a number of rooms available with fold-out beds and curtains which are allocated depending on patient need. To ensure privacy, we also have a screen available for use at the bedside.

The benefits for mothers who are or who have breastfed include;
- The early milk, known as Colostrum, produced up to day 3-4 is rich in antibodies, in particular IgA which lines the baby’s intestines, thereby protecting the baby from gastrointestinal infections. This is vitally important for premature infants who are at a greater risk of a bowel condition known as Necrotising Enterocolitis (NEC).
- Breastmilk is particularly rich in fatty acids which plays a very important role in brain development
- Breastfeeding or expressing milk for a sick baby provides mothers with a vital role in their baby’s care at a time when they may feel very vulnerable.

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