Aims

- To assist mothers and babies in achieving successful breastfeeding.
- To nurture the woman's confidence and ability to breastfeed.

Strategies to be implemented at birth: Applies to healthy term babies, regardless of the mode of birth, to facilitate breastfeeding

- Maintain uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact following birth for at least one hour and until the baby has breastfed. The instinct to suck is especially strong soon after birth and it can establish a pattern for future feeds. When possible, the baby should be left undisturbed to facilitate the natural rooting reflex and to latch spontaneously within the first hour of life. This helps to imprint the breastfeeding behaviours and assists to populate the newborn baby’s microbiome from the mother’s skin.
- Teach the mother to offer the breast when the baby demonstrates cues to feed. Refer to Chapter 7 within the Pregnancy Birth and Your Baby book (PDF, 4.63MB).
- Avoid unnecessary interruptions such as cephalo-caudal checks, weighing, bathing or passing the baby around until after the first feed.
- Offer encouragement, reassurance and give guidance if necessary.
- After an initial alert period some infants become sleepy for the next 24 hours or so.
- Some babies may take a few days to become interested in feeding. Until that happens, the colostrum/breast milk needs to be expressed regularly and given to the baby. Provide the mother with a full explanation of how to finger, cup or bottle feed according to her preference. Inform the mother why teats are best avoided in early lactation. If the mother chooses to give colostrum / expressed breast milk (EBM) via a bottle, use a slow flow teat.
Strategies to overcome the lack of interest in breastfeeding

- If the baby does not show interest in suckling during the first few hours of birth:
  - Reassure the mother that, given time, the baby will usually become interested, but this may take a few hours longer
  - Keep the baby close to their mother, preferably skin to skin to stimulate natural breastfeeding reflexes of rooting and suckling
  - Show the mother how to express colostrum by hand and how to use the electric breast pump. See also videos on the BFC website.

  **Note:** the amount of colostrum will increase gradually with frequent expression.

- Offer the EBM to the baby at least every 3 hours until the baby is ready to latch and feed effectively.

- Commence variance MR261.12 Sleepy Newborn Infant.

  **Note:** If by 6 hours the baby is not suckling effectively at the breast, request review by the paediatrician to assess the baby’s well-being.

- Avoid excessive handling of the baby by anyone other than the mother

- Encourage the mother to offer breast every 3 hours (sooner if the baby is demonstrating feeding cues) and continue to express after feeds and offer all colostrum to the baby until the baby is feeding effectively.

- If the baby is still unable to suckle, arrange for paediatric review prior to discharge.
References and resources (including related forms)

Bibliography

Forms
MR261.12 Sleepy Newborn Infant Variance

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