

# Breast Milk Fortifier

An information guide



# **Breast Milk Fortifier**

We hope that you find the following information beneficial during your baby's stay on the neonatal unit. Please feel free to ask any questions at any time as all our staff are here to help.

## **Breast milk is best**

Your breast milk is the best source of nutrition for your baby. Babies born at 25 weeks gestation or below are significantly less developed than those born at 30 weeks and face many challenges including the development of the gut.

Breast milk is particularly good for premature babies because it provides important non nutritional components such as antibodies, enzymes, hormones and growth factors.

Although breast milk is best, it has been shown that some premature babies fed on breast milk alone do not grow as well as those who receive fortified breast milk.

This is because despite the many benefits of breast milk the nutrient levels in the breast milk may not fully meet the increased nutritional needs of your premature baby.

## **Breast milk Fortifier**

Breast milk fortifiers are made from processed cow's milk protein with added nutritional supplements. The protein from the cow's milk is broken down (hydrolysed) into smaller fragments which make it easy to dissolve in the breast milk.

Protein is essential for your baby's growth, maintenance and repair of new body tissue. Your baby's growth is not just about "gaining weight" but it's also important to monitor their bone development. Your baby's growth will be closely monitored by the doctors and nurses and they will likely remain on fortifier until they are fully breastfed.

Breast milk fortifier has the advantage over supplementing with liquid preterm formula milk as it still allows all of your milk to be used.

Occasionally very few small babies have difficulty tolerating the high mineral content of the fortifier and may have to stop use. It may then be restarted again after a few days or used at half strength and tolerance monitored closely. Your baby will be receiving full milk feeds before fortifier is considered and also on the maximum volume of milk tolerated, for example 180mls/kg/day.

The fortifier can sometimes be stopped due to other reasons such as lack of weight gain.

### **How is Breast milk fortifier used?**

The nurse caring for your baby will be responsible for adding the fortifier to your breast milk, and will show you how this is done.

One sachet of fortifier is usually added into 25 mls of your expressed breast milk, we start at half strength (half sachet, or 1 sachet in 50mls milk) if your baby has had issues with not tolerating feeds, then it is increased to full strength guided by your babies tolerance.

The fortifier would ideally be added to freshly expressed breast milk, although this is not always possible. Fortifier does not dissolve well in very cold milk so it is good practice for the milk to be taken out of the fridge a short time before. Once added it needs to be shaken well for up to 60 seconds.

For individual breast milk fortifiers see suppliers leaflet.

This leaflet provides a guide only. If you have any concerns or would like more information then please ask the doctor or nurse providing your baby's care.

Written by Nicola Hughes and Dr Lydia Bowden

**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service**

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