

## Note on Breastfeeding

*“Breastfeeding has profoundly beneficial effects on the lives of infants, children and their mothers, and is an arena where the interests of mothers and babies align with those of the health service and wider society”* Professor Mike Kelly, Director of the Centre for Public Health Excellence. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

Nearly every woman can successfully breastfeed her baby(ies) but almost everyone needs **help and support** to achieve this.

The language we use and the way we present information is vitally important:

‘Breast is best’ can be seen as idealistic, and for many mothers, choosing a formula is simply good enough. More over if breastfeeding is not achieved/not possible, mothers may feel a sense of failure.

So, rather than listing the benefits of breastfeeding, here is a table showing the **risk associated with not breastfeeding**:

| Outcome   | Excess risk<br>(approximated using odds ratios) |
|---|---|
| <b>Among full-term infants</b>  |   |
| Hospitalisation for lower respiratory tract disease in the 1 <sup>st</sup> year | 257%  |
| Diarrhoea and vomiting (gastrointestinal infection)                             | 178%  |
| Acute ear infection (otitis media)  | 100%  |
| Asthma, with family history   | 67%   |
| Type 2 diabetes   | 64%   |
| SIDS  | 56%   |
| Eczema (atopic dermatitis)  | 47%   |
| Asthma, with no family history  | 35%   |
| Childhood obesity   | 32%   |
| Acute lymphocytic leukaemia   | 23%   |
| Acute myelogenous leukaemia   | 18%   |
| <b>Among preterm infants</b>  |   |
| Necrotising enterocolitis   | 138%  |
| <b>Among mothers</b>  |   |
| Ovarian cancer  | 27%   |
| Breast cancer   | 4%  |

Source: adapted from US Department of Human Services 2011

In the UK, the Millennium Cohort Study suggests that each month, an estimated 53% of hospitalisation for diarrhoea and 27% for lower respiratory tract infections could have been prevented by exclusive breastfeeding (Quigley et al., 2007).

The incidence of food allergy is increased if the duration of concurrent breastfeeding at the introduction of other food proteins (including milk) is decreased (Grimshaw et al., 2013). The prevalence of cow’s milk allergy in formula fed babies is 2-3% vs 0.5% in breastfed babies (i.e. a fourfold increase risk) (Høst, 2002).

Only 17% of UK women manage to exclusively breast feed to 17 weeks (HSCI, 2010). In Hampshire the breastfeeding initiation rate remains stable at around 80%. However, only 48.8% of babies are fully or partially breastfed at 6-8 weeks (Public Health England, 2013-2014 data).

All Health Visitors in Hampshire are [BFI](#) accredited but further work is needed to encourage, support and promote breastfeeding in Hampshire.

### Really useful resources for parents and health professionals

[www.what0-18.nhs.uk/](http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/)

[www.healthystart.nhs.uk/](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/)

[www.firststepsnutrition.org/](http://www.firststepsnutrition.org/)

[www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/)

[www.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhs.uk/)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

