

Guidelines for staff supporting breastfeeding women in prison



Who might be breastfeeding?

- Women on the Mother & Baby Unit (MBU)
- Women on the houseblocks who have recently returned from hospital and are separated from their babies
- Women on the houseblocks who have recently arrived in prison and are separated from babies or toddlers

What might these women be experiencing?

- **Leaking breasts** – leaking small quantities of breast milk between feeds
- **Physical discomfort** – breast engorgement when the breast is tender, enlarged and filled with milk
- **Physical pain** – such as breast injury or trauma, cracked or bleeding nipples, bruising or inflammation of the breast tissue, infection or mastitis including flu-like symptoms, nausea, nipple discharge and fatigue
- **Emotional and hormonal changes** – distinct mood swings, heightened emotions including anxiety, self-consciousness, embarrassment, frustration or distress depending on a woman's personal situation

What practical support might these women need?

- **A regular supply of disposable breast pads** – women may use breast pads to help absorb leaking milk or to simply help them feel more comfortable. Giving women enough breast pads to last a few days will help them to feel more supported and less self-conscious about having to ask for more each day.
- **Access to a good quality breast pump** – women may choose to express their milk to give to their babies in a bottle or to send out to babies in the community. All communal (shared) breast pumps should be thoroughly checked and cleaned before being given to a woman for the first time. It is essential that all prison-issued breast pumps are in good working order and sterilised before use. Please refer to **Appendix A: Guidelines for the provision of breast pumps in prison** for more information.
- **Access to a private, comfortable place for expressing** – women need to be given regular breaks from their daily duties and routines to express their milk in order to maintain and regulate their milk supply and ensure their personal comfort. To facilitate this, women should have access to a quiet, undisturbed, private space where they can express by hand or with a breast pump.
- **Permission to keep personal items like baby blankets, soft toys and photos** – women who are expressing their milk may benefit from having personal items close by to help stimulate hormones (oxytocin) that support milk production. Such items should not be placed in PROP whenever possible.
- **A supply of breast milk storage bags** – expressed breast milk should only ever be stored in sterilised bottles or breast milk storage bags. Other containers, vessels and bags are not suitable. Before storing it in a fridge or freezer, ensure that the milk is clearly labelled with a woman's full name and the date it was expressed.
- **A fridge/freezer with a lock, used exclusively to store expressed breast milk** - expressed breast milk should be refrigerated or frozen as soon as possible and no later than 6 hours after it has been expressed. Expressed milk should ideally be stored at the back of the fridge (the coldest part) or in the freezer compartment. Breastmilk fridge/freezers should be locked to prevent any tampering or contamination of milk. Please refer to **Appendix B: Guidelines for the safe storage and transportation of breastmilk in prison** for more information.
- **Support to make appointments with midwives/GP (as appropriate)** – women may need to see health professionals more frequently when they are recovering from birth, expressing their milk and/or using medication. Staff should remain sensitive to this and help facilitate appointments whenever possible.
- **Opportunities and support to breastfeed and express milk during visits** – staff should enable women to breastfeed their children and/or express their milk during contact visits in a discreet, comfortable and supportive way.

APPENDIX A - Guidelines for the provision of breast pumps in prison

1. Breast pumps provided to residents for communal use should be hospital-grade (ie pumps designed for use by multiple people), closed system breast pumps.
 - a. Closed system breast pumps have a barrier that prevents expressed milk from entering the pump mechanism and cross-contaminating the next user's milk or allowing mould to grow inside of the pumps components. Open system breast pumps do not have this barrier and are designed to only be used by one person in the lifetime of the appliance.
 - b. Breast pumps can be manual and electric. Both types of breast pump can be used effectively and no one type is better than another although women may have personal preferences. Most electric pumps are mains operated which is preferable for prison use. Battery powered electric breast pumps may be unsuitable for prison use in some circumstances.
2. Breast pumps should be stored safely and securely with all component parts clearly labelled and user instructions included.
3. A list of available breast pumps and where they are stored within the prison should be frequently updated and shared with all staff members responsible for supporting lactating women.
4. Breast pumps should undergo regular maintenance and be checked for discolouration, damage and missing parts. Any replacement parts should be manufacturer approved and fully compatible with the appliance. The regular servicing of breast pumps is essential to ensure that women are always provided with high quality, safe and operational appliances.
 - a. Electric breast pumps will require periodic PAT testing – www.PAT.org.uk recommends that frequent use, handheld appliances should be tested every 12 months
5. Damaged or incomplete breast pumps should be taken out of service with immediate effect.

APPENDIX B - Guidelines for the safe storage and transportation of breastmilk in prison

1. The prison should provide at least one easily accessible fridge/freezer exclusively for the storage of expressed breast milk. No other food stuffs should be stored in the same appliance and the fridge should be securely locked when not in use to prevent any tampering or contamination of stored milk.
 - a. If only one fridge/freezer can be provided for this purpose, it should be situated on the MBU.
 - b. It would be preferable to provide additional fridge/freezers for this purpose on houseblocks/residential wings also – this will help reduce time spent by staff transporting milk to bespoke storage facilities and will minimise delays in refrigerating or freezing expressed breast milk
2. Expressed breastmilk should always be collected and stored in specially designed breastmilk storage bags or sterilised bottles. Other containers, vessels and bags are not suitable. All expressed breastmilk should be clearly labelled with a woman's full name and the date it was expressed.
3. Expressed breast milk should be collected and refrigerated or frozen no later than 6 hours after a woman has expressed it. Expressed breastmilk kept at room temperature for longer than 6 hours is at risk of contamination and should be thrown away. Women should be supported to express and store their breastmilk in small quantities. This will help avoid waste and/or delays in refrigeration/freezing in instances where women plan to 'add to' the supply they have expressed before storing it.
4. Expressed breast milk should be stored at the back of a fridge where it is coolest using the following NHS approved guidelines
 - a. In fridges 5°C - 10°C, expressed breast milk can be stored for up to 3 days
 - b. In fridges less than 4°C expressed breast milk can be stored for up to 8 days
 - c. In the ice compartment of a fridge, expressed breast milk can be stored for up to 2 weeks
 - d. In full freezers, expressed breast milk can be stored for up to 6 months
5. When expressed breast milk needs to be transported to babies in the community, arrangements to facilitate this should be made regularly so as to ensure that women can provide their babies with their expressed milk frequently and reliably.
6. When transporting expressed breastmilk to babies in the community, milk can be stored in a cool bag with ice packs for up to 24 hours.
7. Defrosted breastmilk should never be re-frozen. Once defrosted milk has been prepared in a bottle and offered to a baby, it must be used within 1 hour. Any leftover milk should be discarded.