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## Rosie stops offering free formula milk to boost breastfeeding

Jack Grove

Mothers at The Rosie Maternity Hospital have to bring their own formula milk into hospital if they decide not to breastfeed.

In an effort to boost breastfeeding, women are no longer being offered baby milk formula after giving birth.

Mums can discuss the issue with their midwife, but those who decide to use formula feed will have to obtain their own supplies.

Greater help will be given to support breastfeeding, including better instructions on how to use breast milk storage facilities.

This will not apply to babies in neonatal wards or those requiring 'extra care'. The change is designed to bring the hospital in line with Unicef's Baby Friendly Initiative, which has been backed by the Department of Health.

Dr Jag Ahluwalia, medical director of Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The most valuable medicine we have within the hospital is mothers' milk.

"However, if people cannot breastfeed for medical reasons, we will help them."

In a report to the trust's governors, Dr Ahluwalia says: "Currently 83 per cent of women delivering at The Rosie intend to breastfeed, but this number dropped considerably as women encounter difficulties and resort to either giving up or to mixed feeding.

"Becoming a 'Baby Friendly' unit will help to maintain rates of breastfeeding and give women the skills and confidence to continue."

The move was welcomed by Cambridge-based charity Baby Milk Action, which campaigns to boost breastfeeding levels across the world.

Policy director Patti Rundall said: "If people go home with a free supply of formula milk, you are making it the norm.

"It is not – breastfeeding is. By supplying formula milk, hospitals are also endorsing particular brands and this should not happen.

"When I had children, bottle-feeding was routine and there was very little support to encourage breastfeeding. I'm delighted this is changing.

"Mothers should not feel they are being forced into breastfeeding, but health authorities have a responsibility to make sure mothers know what is best for their child.

"They should know the risks of formula feeding, which include higher incidence of ear infections, arthritis and many other conditions.

"Often just pointing out these risks is seen as aggressive promotion of breastfeeding, but people should know the dangers.

"And we should not have the sort of promotion of bottle-feeding in the UK, which encourages mothers to think it is the norm and carries no risks."

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Tracey  
12/07/2010 09:07

I think it sucks that The Rosie have decided to stop supplying formula milk as when I had my previous 2 babies I was asked how i wished to feed them and formula was never promoted nor was free mild given upon leaving the hospital and parents know that breast is best and that they have to buy the formula milk themselves. I for one am extremely worried by this move and I have a phobia about my breasts and god forbid if lwas forced to as I did not have any fomula or bottles with me then I am sure if would have increase psychological effects on me as I suffer intermittently with depression anyway. It should be a parents choice, not the choice of the hospital for removing the option of formula

Steve  
08/07/2010 17:29

We were determined from the outset to breastfeed our children, and when our first son arrived my wife tried very hard to. But he did not take immediately to the breast; he could neither latch on properly nor suck strongly enough, despite several experts giving advice on technique. Our child was, in our opinion, not sufficiently nourished for the first two weeks and was basically hungry all the time. We eventually realized that it was essential to supplement his breastmilk with formula, and he fared much better after that. Eventually he became an all-breastmilk baby, but it took several weeks. I am surprised by "Mom of three's" comment that our society "knows little about breastfeeding." There is SO much pro-breastfeeding information and campaigning aimed at parents-to-be that it's on the verge of propaganda, with those unable to do it being almost stigmatized. I am sure that if more balanced information had been made available, we would have given him a mixed breast/formula die

Linda Locking  
08/07/2010 15:55

I cant believe they are stopping the formula milk supply, what ever happened to choice and human rights??? I am all for "supporting" breasting but not "forcing" breastfeeding. who relictically outs formulas ilk in their overnight bag along with their bottles and steriliser etc etc???? i have 2 children now 7 and 4 but had no inclination to breastfeed and certainly would not have been made to its a mothers choice not a midwives choice about how a mother feeds her baby!! let mums be mums and do what they want to do after the birth of their precious one! let them enjoy it not feel presured that they have to breastfeed especially after how ever many hours labour some of them have been in!

Mom of three.  
08/07/2010 12:32

I think this is wonderful! I think that it will encourage mom's to educate themselves about feeding options before they have their baby. I teach breastfeeding classes to low-income mothers and its amazing now little our society knows about breastfeeding. Over time, mother's have just accepted the fact that their baby will receive free formula from the hospital at birth. They give no thought, whatsoever, about what they are going to feed their baby until they are born. What a perfect marketing scheme on the part of formula companies! Maybe taking away free formula will encourage more mother's to educate themselves on how to feed their baby and what is best. Sure, breastfeeding may not be best for every mom; but it is best for every baby. Hospitals have a responsibility to only provide the option that is the best nutritionally for all; including babies. I applaud the Rosie Maternity Hospital for their decision.

Mum of two.  
08/07/2010 11:02

This is just silly. People who want to breast feed will do it regardless of whether or not free formula milk is available. I was never sent home with a 'free supply'. But it was nice to know I didn't have to worry the minute after a long birth about making up a bottle. Why put more pressure on people who know they do not want to breast feed? I felt pressurised by them already with my two, to breast feed after giving birth, After telling them numerous times I did not want to. Let people make their own decisions off their own back, and stop trying to influence them with your views you old fashioned fools!

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