

Breastfeeding Supplementer

An information leaflet from the Breastfeeding Walk-in Clinic, Mater Dei Hospital. Phone: 25454445

If your breastfed baby needs supplementing with expressed breast milk or formula a breastfeeding supplementer allows this to be done without introducing a bottle teat. The sucking action on a bottle is totally different than on the breast and some babies start to reject the breast in favor of the easier action needed for bottle feeding. Your baby must be able to latch effectively and have some sucking action on the breast for a breastfeeding supplementer to work.

REASONS FOR USING A SUPPLEMENTER ARE:

- Disorganized suck
- Poor weight gain
- Weight loss
- Sleeping after a short feeding period

A breastfeeding supplementer is definitely the best way of giving extra milk to a breastfed baby. As sucking is taking place on the breast there is stimulation which enhances milk production and the baby will also be drinking breast milk from the breast at the same time. Most importantly though the baby is learning how to breastfeed, whilst it is being made a little easier for him and increasing the amount of available milk. Breastfeeding supplementer are manufactured which are easier to handle but only necessary if supplementing will be necessary for some time. An improvised one uses a feeding tube (provided by the ward or breastfeeding clinic) and either a feeding bottle where the teat has been enlarged to allow the tube to pass through or a syringe.

HOW TO USE A BREASTFEEDING SUPPLEMENTER

- The tube is taped to the breast with the tip no further than the end of the nipple
- Your baby must be positioned well at the breast. This makes using the supplementer much easier.
- You may need to hold the tube in place during the latch as your baby may displace it with his tongue.

- An alternative method is to latch the baby onto your breast and then the tube is slipped into the corner of your baby's mouth whilst sucking. The tube should be aimed slightly upwards and straight towards the back of the baby's mouth.
- There is no need to refill the tube, when the tube is in the right position the supplement will find its way up. Initially the baby sucks the milk into the tube which then continues to flow by gravity.
- The higher the supplement container is held the faster the milk flows. You need to be careful not to make the flow faster than your baby can cope with or too easy for your baby.
- The supplement should not take along time to finish. If this occurs the tube is not properly placed.
- Cleaning and sterilizing must be demonstrated ideally hypochlorite solution should be used.

WEANING THE BREASTFEEDING SUPPLEMENTER

- You should maintain contact with the breastfeeding clinic for guidance and monitoring of weaning from the device.
- It may be that you only need to supplement for a few days or it may take a number of weeks.