

Food Safety and Hygiene &

Nutrition, Food Science and Technology

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Supporting and protecting breastfeeding in hospital and at home

Jo Watt

Hearts Milk Bank, UK

Breastfeeding rates in the UK are amongst the lowest in Europe, despite many women who give up saying that they had intended to breastfeed for much longer. It is acknowledged that there are many reasons for this, but often lack of specialist support, knowledge and encouragement to continue, are reasons given for discontinuing and rates to be low.

Getting support in the first few days is crucial to keeping breastfeeding on track. After just the first week it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain breastfeeding once problems have arisen, supplementation has started, and the mothers supply has been compromised.

Add to this increasing numbers of mothers and babies delivering with complex conditions and needs, and babies born prematurely requiring admission to the neonatal unit. This results in mothers and babies needing to be separated, which in itself can make establishing breastfeeding much more difficult. This is also the group of mothers and babies where there can be a lack of knowledge and skills to help manage and give this much needed care to establish and maintain breastfeeding. Lack of practical knowledge and skills is known to be associated with increased formula supplementation and early drop

off, instead of supporting and establishing breastfeeding.

This presentation will include details of the supportive interventions required to ensure optimal support of new mothers in hospital and examples of typical problems seen by Lactation Consultants working with mothers at home.

Speaker Biography

Jo Watt is a midwife and IBCLC Lactation Consultant. Having qualified as a midwife, she gained extensive experience of working in both hospital and community settings. After raising her own family, she became interested in infant feeding and breastfeeding support, and trained as a breastfeeding counsellor. Since that time, she has built her career around her passion for supporting mothers in making the best feeding choices for their child, helping to create the necessary infrastructure and processes within the health service, and engaging directly with mothers to provide one-to-one support. Jo has worked in two NHS Trusts as the Infant Feeding Lead and the project lead for Baby Friendly Accreditation, delivering training programmes for midwifery staff, and establishing best practices for feeding support within the maternity units. Following this, she has been practising within the community, including voluntary work as part of the team in an NHS feeding clinic and consultation through a small lactation practice. Jo's primary current activity is as the Lactation Services Co-ordinator at the Hearts Milk Bank, a charity established in Hertfordshire to help provide supplies of donated breast milk to mothers nationwide. She is involved in donor recruitment and lactation support, and also supports families in the community where donor milk is used to help mothers having feeding problems. For these mothers, extra feeding support and access to screened donor milk can provide a buffer until they have an increase in their own supply or simply provide breast milk that wouldn't be available because of maternal illness.

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