



**Wolverhampton
Diabetes Care**

Breastfeeding and Diabetes

Can women with diabetes breastfeed?

Women with diabetes should aim to have a normal experience of pregnancy and this includes breast feeding. Breast milk is the best food for the child and gives protection against infection.

Can women with diabetes breastfeed?

Yes, the majority can with no problems. In some women with diabetes, breastfeeding may be difficult to establish if early feeding is interrupted by hypoglycaemic (low blood sugar) in the baby, or if there is separation from the baby due to caesarean section or if the baby has been in the special care baby unit (SCBU). If so, the mother is encouraged to express her milk for use by the baby. Any difficulties with insulin and diabetes control whilst breast feeding can usually be easily dealt with.

Is my breast milk the same as milk from a woman who does not have diabetes?

Yes. Even if your diabetes is poorly controlled, your milk will be quite normal.

Do I have to make special changes to my diet or insulin dose?

You may have to increase the amount of food you eat, particularly starchy (carbohydrate) foods, because breast milk is high in a carbohydrate sugar called lactose as well as containing proteins, fats and minerals. As you feed your baby, you will lose that sugar and your blood glucose will drop, which may cause a hypo. As well as adjusting diet, you may need less insulin when breast feeding because baby is using some of your food energy through the breast milk. Breastfeeding may lower your insulin dose by up to 25%. Test before and after a few feeds so that you know how much to adjust your insulin and food intake by.

Can I breastfeed if I am taking diabetes tablets?

No, these drugs cross into the milk and can affect the baby. You will almost certainly have switched to insulin during pregnancy. If you want to breast feed, and we strongly encourage you to do so, continue with insulin whilst you are breastfeeding. Your doctor, health visitor or diabetes team will advise you about this.

Will I gain weight due to breastfeeding?

No. Breastfeeding may help you lose weight, even though you are eating more. You can focus on losing weight after you have stopped breastfeeding.

Seeking advice and what care to expect

Your breast feeding plan should have been fully discussed with you during the antenatal period. Get any extra advice as needed from you GP, practice nurse, midwives, health visitors, diabetes team and dietitians.

Your doctor, diabetes specialist nurse and dietician can also help you balance your food and insulin levels at this time especially if you are having any difficulty with hypos.