

# How to assess a Breastfeed

## Guidance for Nurses

### Single Point Lesson

### Assessing the latch

- Is the baby able to maintain the latch?
- Is it comfortable for Mum?
- Does the baby have a good rhythmical suck? Initially a baby will have lots of short quick sucks and then should change to long rhythmical sucks when there is a let down.
- Can you hear any swallows? (It can be difficult)
- Can you hear any clicking or stridor? If so please refer to Lactation Consultant.

### Should they feed one side or two?

- Most babies will feed off the first breast for the longest. They may or may not take a second side.
- The milk at the end of the breastfeed has the highest fat content. This is why it is important to always drain the first breast first before switching sides.

### How long is a good feed?

This is very individual and depends on the:

- mothers milk supply
- sucking pattern
- age of the baby

An average feed is about 15-30 minutes but can be shorter and can be longer and still be a good feed.



#### Key staff for assistance:

- \* Charge Nurses
- \* Clinical Charge Nurses
- \* Nurse Educators
- \* Lactation Consultants

### Do they need a top up?

- Are they content after the breastfeed? If yes consider not topping up.
- Did they feed for 10 min or more? If yes consider not topping up.
- Does the mother have a good milk supply-? If yes consider not topping up.
- Is there concern about weight loss? If so see N:\Groups\INTRANET\NICU\Guidelines relating to excessive weight loss.pdf for guidance.
- Does the baby have limited energy to transfer enough breast milk? Does the baby's medical condition limit its ability to breastfeed? If this is the case they may need top ups.
- Have they had top ups before? If they have had top ups in the past consider if they still need to be.

### How should you give a top up?

If the baby is still awake, the top up could be another breastfeed?

- Do they have or need a NGT in situ? Use the NGT if it is available for top ups as this is less likely to have a negative impact on breastfeeding.
- Is there ebm available? Check the mother is expressing.
- Don't introduce a bottle to a breastfed baby unless absolutely necessary.
- If topping up use the breastfeeding code.to guide you <http://www.adhb.govt.nz/newborn/Guidelines/BreastCode.htm>.
- Do not supplement the infant who scores an E if the mother is available for another breastfeed. Consider not supplementing then infant who scores a D if the mother is available for another breastfeed. The infant may wake sooner for the next feed.

