

Help for breastfeeding mothers and babies with shared care

The World Health Organisation and the UK Department of Health advise all mothers to totally breastfeed for the first six months of a baby's life and to continue to breastfeed along with other foods until the child is at least two years old. This is because breastfeeding promotes health in mothers and children, including helping to reduce risks of sudden infant death syndrome, diarrhoea, chest and ear infections in infants as well as preventing breast cancer, ovarian cancer and diabetes in mothers. However, despite these and many other benefits, many mothers in UK do not breastfeed beyond the early weeks. This is because they often do not get sufficient support and help to continue breastfeeding when they want to, especially when they come across difficulties such as nipple pain, fractious babies, poor infant weight gain and continuous feeding.

It has been suggested that more mothers would continue breastfeeding if they received extra breastfeeding support from a range of lay and health professionals that is tailored to their individual needs and preferences. However, many mothers do not feel satisfied with the current care they receive. Midwives are well placed to provide meaningful support to breastfeeding mothers by following UNICEF UK Baby Friendly standards which were updated in 2012. Chiropractic therapy has been shown to help babies with muscular type problems that affect breastfeeding.

To see whether support offered by a midwife and chiropractor working together in the same clinic could help to solve breastfeeding problems so that mothers were able to breastfeed their babies for longer.

A newborn feeding clinic was set up in the UK by a team of midwives and chiropractors. Each appointment lasted one hour. During each appointment, the midwife together with the chiropractor focused on the mother's and baby's individual problems or needs in order to work out how they could best help. If needed and with the mother's consent, the baby received chiropractic treatment in order to feed more efficiently, and if required the mother was offered information and support to enable her to breastfeed more effectively. To see if the service was helpful and satisfied the mothers' needs, they were asked to complete a questionnaire before the appointment and were sent another questionnaire by post 6-12 weeks later.

Eighty-five mothers completed the questionnaires before the appointment and 72 mothers responded to the questionnaire 6-12 weeks later. Before the appointment just over a quarter of mothers (26%) who attended the clinic were totally breastfeeding. This means that the majority of mothers (nearly three quarters) were mixed feeding with some breastmilk and some formula milk, even though their desire was to totally breastfeed. When mothers returned the questionnaires 6-12 weeks later, the majority, (well over three quarters of them, 85%) were totally breastfeeding. This means only a small number were still using formula milk. Overall, almost all mothers (93%) said that breastfeeding was better; they also stated that they were satisfied with the support offered at the clinic and would recommend it to friends.

Midwives and chiropractors working together to offer support in a newborn feeding clinic appeared to help mothers who had been experiencing problems to fully breastfeed their babies and found the support in the clinic useful. A research study needs to be undertaken to find out if there are any more benefits to this type of care compared to usual care.

Joyce Miller, Alison Taylor and Sue Way
Bournemouth University, Anglo-European College of Chiropractic

Publication

[Parent Reports of Exclusive Breastfeeding After Attending a Combined Midwifery and Chiropractic Feeding Clinic in the United Kingdom: A Cross-Sectional Service Evaluation.](#)

Miller J, Beharie MC, Taylor AM, Simmenes EB, Way S.

J Evid Based Complementary Altern Med. 2016 Apr