

Breast feeding made easier

A new project is offering support and encouragement to new mothers in Havering who want to breast feed their babies.

Breast feeding is proven to give babies the best start in life, giving them all the nutrients they need as well as protecting them against infections, diabetes, eczema and asthma.

And there are benefits for mothers too – it reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and of bone weakness in later life. It also helps women to return to their pre-pregnancy weight more quickly.

Add to the medical evidence the fact that breast milk is free, and much more convenient than formula, and it might seem surprising that many mothers choose not to breast feed.

Jennifer Pateman is Breast Feeding Co-ordinator with Lifeline Community Projects, which is commissioned by NHS Havering to run ante-natal and post-natal support groups for parents.

She says that sometimes breast feeding can seem difficult at first, but if new parents receive good support and information the problems can be easily overcome.

Sometimes, new mothers are put off

breast feeding because it is painful.

Jennifer said: "I talk to some women who think that breast feeding always hurts and if they want to do it they will have to put up with it. But that is just not the case at all; it can usually be sorted out by changing the baby's position, and supporting the way the baby attaches."

To support new mothers with breast feeding, Lifeline is setting up a peer support network. Women with experience of breast feeding are being trained to offer advice and encouragement to other mothers who may be experiencing difficulties.

New mums will be allocated a peer supporter, and be able to talk to them over the phone, or face to face in their nearest Children's Centre in Havering.

For more information on breast feeding, contact Jennifer Pateman on 0800 080 3995 or 07972 667951. Or you can email jenniferpateman@lifelineprojects.co.uk.

Breast Feeding Awareness week runs from June 21-27. For more information, see www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk or call 0300 100 0212.

>> Rebecca Edinburgh (pictured right with son Kian), from Hornchurch, has two children – Ashlyn, 12, and Kian, four months.

When Lifeline asked her if she would train to become a breast feeding supporter, she wanted to help.

She explained: "I knew that I wanted to breast feed Kian, but at first it was very painful because for some reason, he would only feed on one side.

"I had heard Jennifer speaking at an ante natal class, so I contacted her and she talked to me and reassured me. If it had not been for her I would not have continued breast feeding, but she suggested holding Kian so he was facing in a different direction, and that solved the problem.

"She carried on ringing me every two days and helped me with lots of other general feeding issues.

"Although I have a 12-year-old daughter, I felt like a new mother again when Kian was born, because of the big gap. Because I had to go back to work when Ashlyn was three weeks old, I wasn't



able to breast feed her for long, but this time I can take more time off from my job.

"When Jennifer asked if I had time to take part in the mentoring project I said yes straight away. I think it is so important to encourage other mums to have a go, and also to help them stick with it if they are having problems, like I was."

Sleep safe, sleep sound with baby



Having a new baby is a joyful experience, but it can also be an anxious time for parents.

Cot death is extremely rare, and the causes cannot always be explained, but there are ways to reduce the risk of this tragedy occurring.

NHS Havering is reminding mums and dads about how to settle their babies to sleep safely. This supports the advice which is given to parents by hospital midwives, community midwives and health visitors.

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a crib or cot in a room with you for the first six months.

Mattresses should be firm and flat.

Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair or leave them there - these are often dipped or sloped and can be

dangerous even if your baby can't roll.

Don't let your baby get too hot – keep their head uncovered.

It is especially dangerous for your baby to sleep in your bed if you, or your partner, smoke (even if you never smoke in bed or in the home); have been drinking alcohol; take medication or drugs that make you drowsy; feel very tired; or if your baby had a low birth weight (5½ lb or 2.5kg) or was premature (born before 37 weeks).

Bernie Gibbins, supervisor of midwives at King George's Hospital and Queen's Hospital, Romford said: "We always discuss in detail all aspects of caring for infants, including safe sleeping, with new mothers before they leave, and give them a booklet and information card to take home."

When mothers return home with their

babies, they are visited by community midwives who can offer continuing advice and support up to 28 days after the birth.

NHS Havering has written to all GPs asking them to remind parents about safe sleeping at babies' six week check-ups, along with information leaflets for parents.

Extra training sessions are also being arranged for health visitors and midwives, to ensure that safe sleeping is emphasised to new parents.

Joy Couits, a health visitor with NHS Havering, said: "Babies don't come with a handbook, although there are numerous sources of information including books, internet, family and friends.

"But parents need to be able to rely on one source of information. Midwives and health visitors give up-to-date advice based on the latest clinical research and evidence. We offer a universal health service, offering advice and support for everyone."

Joy added: "Sometimes dads walk out of the room whilst we are visiting, thinking the health visitor is only there for mum and baby. But we are for the whole family and like to engage with fathers as they will be sharing the responsibilities of parenthood, and need to have the same understanding of how to keep their babies safe."

For details on looking after your baby, contact your health visitor on the number in your Red Book (issued to all new mums).

The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths - Britain's leading charity promoting safe baby care advice - has a Freephone helpline on 080 8802 6868, website at www.fsid.org.uk or email helpline@fsid.org.uk

Don't forget Diabetes Week

NHS Havering is supporting National Diabetes Week (June 13-19) by holding an all-day free information event on Level 2 of the Mall, Romford on Wednesday (June 16) from 10am to 4pm.

Anyone can come along and chat to healthcare professionals and local support groups. There will be information available on local services and support, as well as practical advice on living with diabetes.

For details, contact Havering Family Diabetes Group on 331746, email: haveringfamilydiabetesgroup@btinternet.com or visit the website www.haveringfamilydiabetesgroup.org.uk or www.diabetes.org.uk



New dads are welcome to attend ante-natal groups and learn about the benefits of breast feeding. Research shows that if fathers have as much knowledge as mothers they will work as a team and breast feeding will go on for longer.