

Human Milk Fortifier (HMF)

Human milk fortifier (HMF) is a nutritional supplement that is used on the Neonatal Unit. It is a powder which can be added to expressed breastmilk. It contains additional protein but also essential vitamins which can help support your baby to grow and develop.

Why does my baby need HMF?

Breastmilk is recommended for your baby. It contains the energy, protein, vitamins and minerals that a baby needs. However, your body doesn't know that your baby has been born early. A baby who is born preterm may not have had time to build up stores of essential vitamins and minerals that you would find in a baby born at term. For this reason, if a baby is born less than 34 weeks gestation and less than 1500gms, HMF is recommended to supplement the protein and vitamins that they need.

HMF will ensure your baby receives the optimal nutrients to support their growth, brain and bone development.

How is the HMF given to my baby?

The HMF is prescribed by your doctor. It is a powder which is added to expressed breastmilk before a feed. It is given as a measured amount to ensure the optimum nutrition and is introduced initially in a small amount and increased to a full dose. Depending on your baby's growth and development, the HMF may be used for a short transition period at home whilst you are establishing breastfeeding.

What is HMF made from?

A more accurate name for HMF would be fortifier for human milk. HMF is made from hydrolysed cow's milk protein with additional vitamins and minerals. The protein is hydrolysed or broken down to make it more gentle for baby's digestive system.

Are there any side effects of HMF?

HMF has been used on Neonatal Units in the UK for over 20 years and is generally well tolerated and safe. It is possible that your baby may be sensitive to cow's milk protein and, for this reason, the HMF is introduced in a small amount and increased with careful monitoring.

How long will my baby be on HMF?

The length of time your baby will need HMF will vary. Some infants will stop the HMF prior to discharge, and some infants will continue to have HMF at home for up to 4 weeks. HMF is always stopped if an infant starts to have more than half of their feeds comprising of a standard or preterm formula.

Please speak to your nurse or neonatal dietitian if you have any further questions.

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

Neonatal Unit, Lister Hospital:

- Telephone 01438 284125

Leaflet information

You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.

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