

Study indicates formula can protect against allergies

Adding prebiotic oligosaccharides to infant formula may substantially reduce the incidence of allergies and infections in newborn babies and young children, claim researchers in the *Journal of Nutrition*¹. The benefits lasted long after the babies had stopped receiving formula and had been weaned, and were still evident after two years.

The study builds on earlier evidence that this specific mixture of prebiotic oligosaccharides (Immunofortis, Aptamil) can encourage the balance of healthy bacteria in the gut and enhance the development of the immune system in early life.

Compared to placebo, this prebiotic oligosaccharide-enriched milk was shown to:

- halve the cumulative incidence of atopic dermatitis
- reduce total infections by 30%

- reduce antibiotic prescriptions by a third
- reduce episodes of fever by 43%

The study also shows a 63% reduction in recurrent wheezing, an 85% reduction in allergic urticaria and a reduction by a third in upper respiratory tract infections. The results clearly demonstrate that the protective effect of this prebiotic mixture is lasting beyond the intervention period, suggesting that an immune modulating effect through the intestinal flora modification may be the principal mechanism of action.

1. S Arslanoglu, GE Moro, J Schmitt, et al. Early dietary intervention with a mixture of prebiotic oligosaccharides reduces the incidence of allergic manifestations and infections during the first two years of life. *J Nutr* 2008; **138**: 1091-95.

Visit www.apamil4hcps.co.uk or tel: 08457 623 676



Forum offers practical resources for healthcare professionals

Philips AVENT has doubled the number of practical resource items it produces to support healthcare professionals in their work helping mothers to breastfeed and providing wellbeing advice to parents. These resources include breastfeeding guides in the form of a leaflet and DVD, and bulletins on cleaning and sterilising, which are available free of charge to members of the Philips AVENT Professional Forum. Membership of the forum is free to all healthcare professionals who provide infant feeding information and advice. On joining, members receive a set of Philips AVENT product samples and literature to help them keep abreast of all the latest feeding news.

The forum aims to keep healthcare professionals in touch with ongoing product improvements and introductions and to encourage feedback for research purposes or for specific areas of concern.

Healthcare professionals can join the forum at www.mybabytalk.co.uk or by calling Philips AVENT on 01787 267000.

NICE updates guidance on induction of labour

Induction of labour is a relatively common procedure. In 2004 and 2005 one in every five deliveries in the UK was induced resulting in about 15% of women having instrumental births and 22% having emergency caesarean sections – so it needs to be clearly clinically justified. The recently published NICE guidance takes into account changes in the evidence base and clinical practice and offers best practice advice on the care of women who are having or being offered induction of labour.

Regarding preterm prelabour rupture of membranes after 34 weeks, the guidelines suggest discussion with the patient of the risks to herself, including the possible need for a caesarean section, the risks to her baby, including sepsis and the problems relating to preterm birth and the local availability of NICU facilities, before deciding to induce labour using vaginal prostaglandin E₂.

The full guideline is available from www.ncc-wch.org.uk



Nurturing the next generation of nursing talent

Senior secondary school pupils from the north east have taken part in a Nursing Summer School as the result of a collaboration between NHS Grampian and the School of Nursing and Midwifery at The Robert Gordon University.

Nine pupils from St Machar Academy, Aberdeen Grammar School and the Gordon Schools, Huntly, took part in a week-long programme designed to help interested pupils make more informed decisions about whether nursing is the right career choice for them. It is intended that the Summer School will

become an annual event which will see increased attendance in future years.

Across Scotland, recruitment to nursing programmes is increasingly challenging and it is anticipated that the Nursing Summer School will engage young people who are making career choices by providing them with an experience of nursing and nurse education which is realistic, informative and fun.

Recruitment is underway for next year's Summer School. Contact senior lecturer Debbie Banks on 01224 262688 or email d.banks@rgu.ac.uk

Bliss

for babies born too soon,
too small, too sick



GE imagination at work

Neonatal clinical simulation provides multidisciplinary neonatal training

Bliss and GE Healthcare are collaborating on a joint partnership to deliver a pioneering neonatal simulation training programme. The objective of the programme is to improve the quality of neonatal patient care, which is achieved through the development of a scenario and clinical skills-based multidisciplinary training curriculum in neonatology, based on simulated rather than real clinical settings.

GE Healthcare is funding the three-year major research project due to finish in 2009, led by Dr Lidia Tyszczuk, Consultant in Neonatal Medicine at Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital, London. The project includes the training of instructors in clinical simulation and debriefing techniques.

Clinical simulation is a relatively new teaching technique suitable for clinical education at all levels. While simulators have achieved widespread use in anaesthesia, adult intensive care and emergency medicine, this is the first programme of its kind developed on this scale. The programme has obtained accreditation from the RCPCH and RCN.

NCT reaches out to dads

The NCT is encouraging dads to help support each other during their partner's pregnancy, birth and beyond.

The charity has set up an online support network 'NCT E Dads' that aims to give expectant or new dads support and encouragement from others who are going through the same experiences. Dads are being recommended to sign up to the e-group and to share their thoughts.

Of parents supported by NCT, one in four are dads (28%). The NCT has a range of information for fathers and fathers-to-be via the enquiry line on 0300 330 0770.



Specially designed for breastfeeding in public

Student Nicola Hart has designed a breastfeeding chair with privacy wings and arm support that could be used in cafes and other public places.

The design coincides with the news that mothers are to get the legal right to breastfeed in any public place when the recently announced Equality Bill becomes law. Under current laws, women who breastfeed in places such as restaurants or bars can be charged under public order or indecency legislation, but the new law will make it an offence to stop any woman from breastfeeding a baby up to the age of six months.

The chair provides a good breastfeeding posture and helps keep breastfeeding in public discreet using privacy wings.

Quality of maternity care under threat

A survey by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) shows that the quality of maternity care, overstretched staffing levels and low pay are the issues that most concern midwives and most midwives felt that working today as a midwife is more challenging than it was five years ago.

Dame Karlene Davis, general secretary of the RCM, said: "Figures from the Office of National Statistics show that the emerging baby boom is continuing, with the number of births up in every English region. In 2007, in England, there were over 90,000 more live births than in 2001, a rise of over 16%, but the number of midwives is not keeping pace with the increasing birth rate. Indeed we are seeing midwives posts being lost and services being cut. This is putting midwives under huge pressure, leaving many women and their babies facing a poor birth experience."

Midwives responding to the RCM survey say that the baby boom is having an impact on their work. Approximately one third say their workload has increased, so they have less time to spend with the women in their

care, the quality of care has been negatively affected and almost two-thirds said that these issues are adversely impacting their job satisfaction.

Meanwhile Mary Newburn, Head of Policy Research, at the NCT, commenting on the publication of *Better Births* by the Healthcare Commission said: "Urgent action is now required in some areas as the local maternity services fall short of reasonable expectations. All women should be able to expect one-to-one midwifery care during labour; the birth environment should be fit for purpose and postnatal care should no longer languish as the poor relation to antenatal care.

"The report shows that significantly more could be done – and must be done to provide women with appropriate care. The recommendations made by the HCC have resource implications. It is difficult to see how they can all be met, including following all the guidance for antenatal, intrapartum, mental health and postnatal care, if additional funding is not provided soon."