MATERNITY AND NEONATAL UNIT
GUIDELINE:

MANAGEMENT OF INFANTS OF DIABETIC MOTHERS

SCOPE:
Maternity and Neonatal Unit

AUTHOR:
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PURPOSE:
To provide safe and effective management for infants of diabetic mothers

DEFINITIONS:
Infants of diabetic mothers include
- Infants of Types 1 and 2 insulin dependent diabetic mothers;
- Infants of non-insulin dependent / gestational diabetic mothers;
- Hypoglycaemia refers to a low blood glucose concentration. Infants of diabetic mothers should maintain a blood glucose concentration of 2.6mmol/L or above.

GUIDELINE: Glucose is an essential nutrient for the brain. Abnormally low levels can cause long term neurological developmental impairment.

There is controversy over the definition of a ‘safe’ blood glucose concentration. The WHO Review of Literature, Waikato Hospital and National Women’s Hospital recommend that blood glucose concentration should be 2.6mmol/L or more in all babies of diabetic mothers.

A foetus exposed to high blood sugar in-utero will produce a high level of insulin. This will cause the baby’s blood sugar to fall as soon as he is born. The baby is at greater risk of hypoglycaemia when maternal diabetic control has been poor. Infants of diabetic mothers do not respond to falling blood glucose levels with appropriate counter regulatory response that normal term infants have to prevent hypoglycaemia.

Although the greatest risk of hypoglycaemia is in the first 24 hours of life, it may take 2-4 days to establish stability.

Pre-term infants (<37 weeks gestational age) are at greater risk than term infants for neurological developmental impairment due to hypoglycaemia.
There are multiple potential complications for infants of diabetic mothers in addition to hypoglycaemia. These are macrosomia (which can contribute to shoulder dystocia, birth injuries and birth asphyxia), respiratory distress syndrome, cardiomyopathy, hypocalcaemia, hypomagnesaeamia, polycythemia and hyper viscosity (which can contribute to hyperbilirubinemia).

Although macrosomia is more commonly associated with infants of diabetic mothers, maternal diabetic vascular disease leading to placental insufficiency can impair foetal growth. Small for gestational age infant of a diabetic mother may be at greater risk of adverse outcomes than a large infant because of intrauterine malnutrition.

The mother are encouraged to hand express colostrum antenatally which can be fed to the baby in the first few hours of life. The LMC/core midwife can provide appropriate advice and support with this.

CLINICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HYPOGLYCAEMIA

- Irritability, tremors or jitters. Jitteriness is excessive repetitive movements of one or more limbs which are unprovoked and usually relatively fast. It is important to be sure that this movement is not simply a response to stimuli
- Exaggerated Moro reflex
- High pitched cry
- Lethargy, limpness, hypo tonus
- Apnoea or irregular breathing
- Cyanosis
- Hypothermia, temperature instability
- Poor or inadequate sucking reflex
- Seizures

ASSESSMENT OF THE BABY

Frequent monitoring of the baby’s well-being is essential. The baby should be assessed prior to feeds and at least 3 hourly for the following:

- Level of consciousness
- Tone
- Temperature
- Respiration
- Colour/perfusion

Observations should be recorded on the baby’s feeding chart and in the clinical notes.

MANAGEMENT OF ALL INFANTS OF DIABETIC MOTHERS

1. Skin to skin care should be encouraged at birth as this will help baby achieve early respiratory and thermal stability and will enhance successful breast feeding.
2. Maintenance of body temperature reduces energy demands that contribute to hypoglycaemia. Appropriate management for infants to avoid environmental temperature instability [temperature less than 36 degrees °C or more than 37.5 degrees °C] is vital.

3. Infants of diabetic mothers should have an initial feed in the first hour of life and thereafter at least 3 hourly. If the mother has expressed antenatally then harvested colostrum can be given.

4. If the infant is pre-term (less than 37 completed weeks gestation) or is small for gestational age (less than 10th centile on a Customised Birth Weight Centile (BWC) calculation), discuss the management plan with the neonatal service.

5. All infants of diabetic mothers will have observations of temperature and respirations hourly for the first 3 hours and subsequently 3 hourly and charted for at least 24 hours. Blood glucose levels and feeding are charted.

6. **Monitor blood glucose within the first hour of age.** The blood glucose concentration should be 2.6mmol/L or more in all babies of diabetic mothers. Bedside testing is performed with Optium Xceed (Maternity) or Hemocue(NNU) monitor. It is important to ensure that the foot is warm and the first drop of blood is wiped away prior to sampling. This acts as a screening device. If the test result is displayed as “LO” the blood glucose level may be lower than 1.1 mmol/L and needs urgent referral. *If required I-Stat machine samples are collected in capillary tubes. Blood glucose samples that are processed in the laboratory are collected in a gold top SST Microtainer. Blood glucose samples for laboratory testing should be labelled as urgent to ensure rapid processing.*

7. If the level is 2.6mmol/L or higher and baby is well, repeat blood glucose testing 3 hourly prior to feeds.

8. Continue to monitor the blood sugar until the level is greater than 2.6mmol/L AND the baby is asymptomatic and feeding. Blood glucose testing should be repeated every 3 hours prior to feeding until the baby is 12 hours old. If the level remains 2.6mmol/L or higher then repeat blood glucose testing every 6 hours until the baby is 24 hours old.

9. If the level is less than 2.6mmol/L at any stage see management below.

10. If the baby is unwell or has any clinical sign and symptoms of hypoglycaemia, the blood glucose should be measured immediately and the baby referred to the neonatal service.

11. Breast milk is the safest and most nutritionally appropriate food for infants of diabetic mothers. If the baby is not interested in feeding, encourage skin to skin contact and expressing. EBM can be given to the baby.

12. If the mother has chosen to formula feed, the baby should be formula fed in the first hour of life and thereafter 3 hourly approximately 60 -90 mls/kg/day with her choice of formula (see formula feeding guideline).

13. Infants of diabetic mothers should **not** be discharged within 24 hours of birth and thereafter not until they are feeding well and their condition is stable.
MANAGEMENT OF INFANTS OF DIABETIC MOTHERS WITH BLOOD GLUCOSE LESS THAN 2.6mmol/L

1. The management of hypoglycaemia will depend on the clinical condition of the baby and the severity of the hypoglycaemia.

2. If the baby is unwell or has symptoms of hypoglycaemia, blood glucose should be measured urgently and the baby referred immediately to the neonatal service for further management.

3. **Very low blood sugar levels below 1.2mmol/L require immediate referral** to the neonatal service and may require treatment with IV Glucose infusion aimed at raising blood glucose levels to 2.6mmol/L. 40% Dextrose Gel may also be given while waiting for medical review. A laboratory sample or I-Stat sample will be taken but instigation of treatment will **not** be delayed whilst awaiting results.

4. If the blood glucose level is 1.2 mmol/L - 2.6mmol/L and the baby is asymptomatic, give the baby 0.5ml/kg 40% Dextrose Gel and encourage feeding and/or give available EBM and **recheck in 30 minutes**. If the baby remains asymptomatic and blood glucose improves to 2.6mmol/L or more, observe baby closely and recheck blood glucose prior to the next feed which must be within 3 hours.

5. If the blood glucose 1.2 – 2.6mmol/L and has not improved 30 minutes after appropriate management, repeat the administration of 0.5ml/kg Dextrose Gel and encourage feeding and **recheck the BSL in 30 minutes**.

6. If the BSL improves to 2.6mmol/L or more continue routine care and repeat BSL 3 hourly prior to feeds. Continue to monitor 3 hourly until the baby has had 3 consecutive pre-feed BSL >2.6mmol/L. Then monitor 6 hourly until the baby is 24 hour old and blood sugars remain stable.

7. Infant formula may be given if medically indicated and following consultation and informed verbal consent from the mother (see supplementing the BF infant guideline).

8. Management of hypoglycaemia may include IV Glucose 10% as prescribed. A bolus of 1-2mls/kg may be ordered if blood glucose <1.2mmol/L. Blood glucose will be rechecked an hour after instigating IV management with a goal of increasing the level to 2.6mmol/L or above and monitored until the blood glucose is stable and IV infusion has ceased.

9. Medical review is necessary if 6 doses of oral dextrose gel are required in 48 hours.

10. If there are any concerns about the baby consult with NNU nurse or a paediatrician for advice.

**Glucose screening**

It is important to note that bedside monitoring using the *Optimum Xceed* acts as a rapid screening method. At low glucose concentrations the *Optimum Xceed* is less reliable. It is essential that an appropriate technique is used for neonatal blood samples and that the site is cleaned and dried before lancing and the first drop of blood is wiped away. (See procedure)
**Weaning baby from supplementary feeding**

When baby’s pre-feed blood sugars are stable (>2.6mmol/L) for three consecutive feeds then no further blood sugar checks need to be done provided the feeding regimen remains the same. If the feeding regimen is altered (e.g. reduction or stopping of any feeds) then blood sugar monitoring should be restarted and should continue until three satisfactory levels are obtained. With any subsequent change in the feeding regimen blood sugar levels should be rechecked.

**ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS:**

- Women Child and Youth Guideline – Formula Feeding
- Women, Child and Youth Guideline - Referral of inpatient neonates to paediatric service
- Women Child and Youth Guideline - Supplanting the BF infant
- Organisational Policy – Breastfeeding
- Procedure - Heel stick blood sampling for blood glucose testing

**APPENDICES:**

1. Standing order for 40% Oral Dextrose gel
2. Oral dextrose gel to treat neonatal hypoglycaemia flow chart

**REFERENCES:**

- Infant of a Diabetic mother literature review August 2017 [www.utdol.com](http://www.utdol.com)
- Oral Dextrose Gel to treat neonatal Hypoglycaemia Clinical practice guidelines and flow chart. University of Auckland 2015

**Date of Approval:** December 2017
**Next review Date:** December 2020
APPENDIX 1

STANDING ORDER FOR 40% DEXTROSE GEL FOR TREATMENT OF NEONATAL HYPOGLYCAEMIA

Oral 40% Dextrose Gel dose 0.5 ml/kg may be given in accordance with this guideline by nurses and Midwives Gisborne Maternity Unit.

Authorised by:

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Date of Approval: December 2017
Next review Date: December 2020