

## **Supplementary document 5: LIFESTYLE INFORMATION LEAFLET**

### **Supporting Your Health and Lifestyle after Having Your Baby**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the Supporting Women with Postnatal Weight Management (SWAN) study. The information in this leaflet is to help you to think about your health *after* having your baby, with suggestions for how you can make a difference to your health, your baby's and your family's health. The information reflects the best evidence we currently have from national guidelines for maternity care which should be offered to all women who give birth.

#### ***Why have I been given this leaflet?***

The leaflet is being offered to all women allocated to the weight management group as part of the SWAN study. After having your baby, you will be able to choose which local Slimming World® (Alfreton, UK) group you would like to attend for the 12 week weight management programme, where you will be able to access ongoing support for adopting a healthy lifestyle. You can decide when you feel ready to start Slimming World anytime from 8 to 16 weeks after having your baby – the decision when to start is totally yours and the Research Midwives will keep in touch with you about this.

In addition to the support the local Slimming World® (Alfreton, UK) groups will offer, there are other ways in which you can take action to support your health and the health of your family. The content of this leaflet was prepared with the support of women who had put on more weight than they would have liked at the start of their pregnancy, or had gained more weight than they would have liked at during pregnancy. We hope you will find the information useful and welcome feedback on the advice offered.



#### ***Preparing for a healthy lifestyle after having your baby***

It may be difficult to think about your health after having your baby, but there are some important things you can think about now and in the first few weeks after giving birth. If you want to find out things for yourself, we've also included useful sources for further information.

### ***Stopping smoking***

It is never too late to stop smoking, which will benefit you and your baby immediately! Smoking in pregnancy can lead to a number of health problems during and after pregnancy for your baby. These include serious problems such as having a baby with a low birthweight, or increasing the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy. Babies exposed to tobacco smoke (even second hand tobacco smoke if members of your family or your friends smoke in the house or car) may be more likely to develop coughs or wheezy illnesses, and respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis

If you smoked before your pregnancy and managed to quit or to cut down, it is important to try not to start smoking again after you have had your baby. If your partner or other family members smoke, it is really important that you talk to them about stopping smoking and why it is so important for their health, your health and the health of your baby that you are supported to not start smoking again after having your baby.

Your midwife, health visitor or GP can refer you to a specialist midwife or adviser who will be able to offer you support to quit smoking. You can also get information and support on quitting smoking by calling the NHS pregnancy stop smoking advice line on 0300 123 1044. If your partner or other members of your family wish to quit they can call the NHS Stop Smoking Services.

### ***Healthy eating***

Balanced eating is important during and after you have had your baby. This does not mean that you have to follow a special diet, or eat for two! It does mean that you need to ensure you eat a balanced diet which provides all the nutrition needed for you and your baby to be healthy. If you have been diagnosed with diabetes during your pregnancy, it is important that you continue to follow any advice on your diet that your healthcare professionals may have offered you.

Healthy eating means making choices about portions and ensuring that you are not eating large portions on your plate, ensuring that snacks include fruit or low fat yoghurt, rather than biscuits or crisps, and making sure that you start your day by eating breakfast. The Eatwell Guide shows the balance of food groups it is best to eat (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx>)

The information from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (or NICE) for women who want to manage their weight during and after pregnancy is included in the box below:

- base meals on starchy foods such as potatoes, bread, rice and pasta, choosing wholegrain where possible
- eat fibre-rich foods such as oats, beans, peas, lentils, grains, seeds, fruit and vegetables, as well as wholegrain bread and brown rice and pasta
- eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day, in place of foods higher in fat and calories
- eat a low-fat diet and avoid too many fried foods, take-aways and fast foods
- eat/drink as little as possible of drinks and confectionery high in added sugars (such as cakes, pastries and fizzy drinks); and other food high in free sugars
- eat breakfast
- watch the portion size of meals and snacks, and how often you are eating

You can get further information and advice on healthy eating from your midwives, your health visitor and your GP or from a range of online sources including:

NHS Choices website 'Have a healthy diet in pregnancy' ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/healthy-pregnancy-diet.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/healthy-pregnancy-diet.aspx))

### ***Breastfeeding***

Breastfeeding can help you manage your weight after giving birth and it provides a range of other important health benefits for you and your baby. For your baby, being breastfed provides protection from some infections and diseases, for example diarrhoea and vomiting and ear infections.

If you breastfeed, fat that is automatically stored during pregnancy to enable women to make breast milk will be used up. Breastfeeding can also provide protection for you against some diseases, including some forms of cancer. Longer-term breastfeeding (e.g. for 6 months or longer) can increase protection against development of breast and ovarian cancer and can protect women after menopause against hip fracture and heart disease.

Your breast milk will totally meet your baby's needs for the first 6 months of life – it's free and you won't need to make up bottle feeds! As breastfed babies cannot overfeed, breastfeeding and the close contact it supports between you and your baby is a great way to soothe your baby and to calm both of you. There is also evidence that a baby who is breastfed is less likely to become an overweight child or adult.

You may need help to start breastfeeding (as it could be a new skill for you and your baby) and it's really important that you get support quickly if you experience any challenges. Your midwife and health visitor will be able to support you. They should ask you about breastfeeding at every contact after you have given birth. You should be offered advice and support if you have any concerns. For example, if you find breastfeeding painful your healthcare professional should work with you to find the right position for you and your baby and ensure your baby is attaching properly. They may also tell you about local community support groups, where you can get practical and social support with baby feeding. You can get further information on breastfeeding from websites including:

The NHS breastfeeding website ([www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk/](http://www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk/))

The Breastfeeding Network ([www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/breastfeeding-support](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/breastfeeding-support))

Slimming World ([www.slimmingworld.co.uk/mums](http://www.slimmingworld.co.uk/mums))

The National Childbirth Trust ([www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk))

La Leche League, breastfeeding helpline 0845 120 2918 ([www.laleche.org.uk](http://www.laleche.org.uk))

### ***Keeping active***

A healthy lifestyle also means being physically active during and after your pregnancy. There are many ways to build activity into your daily life without having to join a gym or make specific time to 'exercise'.

All of us with a busy lifestyle, such as being a new mum, could increase the amount of walking we do; for example, by walking to the shops or to school rather than catching a bus or driving, getting off at the tube or bus a stop early and walking the rest of the way or climbing stairs rather than taking a lift. House work such as vacuuming counts as physical activity. After having a baby, it is important to get out and about and meet other mums and babies and plan social activities - arranging walks in your local park or other activities with friends or relatives could be a useful to achieve both! Baby slings or carriers are a great way of getting out and about with your baby in the early days and weeks after the birth. If your baby is born by caesarean section, you should first discuss with your midwife, health visitor or GP about resuming your pre-pregnancy levels of physical activity, just to make sure that you have fully recovered from the surgery.

The following information from NICE and from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (or RCOG) is for women who want to increase their physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle:

- make activities such as walking, swimming, aerobics and gardening part of everyday life and build activity into daily life – for example, by taking the stairs instead of the lift or taking a walk at lunchtime (NICE)
- minimise sedentary activities, such as sitting for long periods watching television, at a computer or playing video games (NICE)
- walk or use another mode of transport involving appropriate physical activity (NICE)
- If pregnancy and delivery are uncomplicated, a mild exercise programme consisting of walking, pelvic floor exercises and stretching may begin immediately. But women should not resume high-impact activity too soon after giving birth (RCOG)

### ***Why is my health important after having my baby?***

Taking steps to care for your health now could have important impacts on your longer-term health and the health of your family. Having a healthy lifestyle, including eating healthily and keeping active, could improve your health if you decide to have another baby. It could also help you to reduce your future risk of developing pregnancy complications such as high blood pressure, diabetes or the need for a caesarean delivery. It could also protect the risk of pregnancy complications which can affect babies, such as miscarriage.



### ***Take time now to get to know your baby***

There are lots of things you can do now to get to know your baby. For example, you could try to make time during the last few weeks of your pregnancy to talk to your baby ‘bump’, and stroke your tummy. If you enjoy listening to music, try to find time to relax and use this time to talk to your baby. When your baby is born, holding, smiling and talking to your baby will help your baby to be happy. How we talk to our babies before and during the first days and weeks of their lives are important steps to help babies to thrive.

### ***Contacts with NHS health professionals***

Sometimes the most difficult thing is to get started, so we hope that the information here will give you some ideas before you give birth and help you to think about how to look after yourself before you start your Slimming World group.

When you have had your baby you will have a number of routine contacts with your local midwives and health visitors, and offered an opportunity to see you GP at around 6 to 8 weeks. This period of time is called the 'postnatal period' and it ends around 6-8 weeks after you have given birth. The care the health professionals offer you should be based on your individual needs and the needs of your baby and written in a care plan which is discussed with you. You should be offered information by the health professionals you come into contact with to help you stay healthy, including advice on diet and exercise, so do ask them questions if needed and think about things that you feel may make it more difficult for you to consider adopting a healthy lifestyle.

You can get further advice on your postnatal care from:

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg37/ifp/chapter/Common-health-concerns-in-women-who-have-recently-given-birth](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg37/ifp/chapter/Common-health-concerns-in-women-who-have-recently-given-birth)

**SWAN study** 

**Supporting Women with PostNatal Weight MaNagement**

**Please contact our research midwives, [REDACTED] if you would like more information or discuss any aspect of the study:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]