



ILCA's INSIDE TRACK

a resource for breastfeeding mothers

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What Is a “Baby-Friendly Hospital” and What Does It Mean to Me?

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Baby-Friendly™ hospitals give mothers and babies the best start in feeding their babies. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) began in 1991 as a joint program of the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. It was created to honor hospitals and birth centers that give the best care to mothers and babies related to infant feeding. To be certified Baby-Friendly, hospitals and birth centers must follow 10 research-based steps that support breastfeeding. They also need to pay a fair price for any formula, feeding bottles and teats used by patients.

These are the 10 steps that Baby-Friendly birth hospitals and centers follow:

1) Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.

The breastfeeding policy guides the staff as they give care to mothers and babies. It spells out all of the other steps. The policy also includes that the hospital or center will pay a fair price for any formula or baby feeding products they use.

2) Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this policy.

It is not enough just to have a policy. In Baby-Friendly hospitals, all midwives, doctors, and nurses have training so that they know how to follow the policy. This training helps make sure that you receive the same information from everyone. Everyone who cares for you will be able to help you breastfeed your baby.

3) Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.

When health workers talk about breastfeeding with their pregnant patients, mothers are more likely to choose to breastfeed. As a pregnant woman you need to know that breastfeeding is important for your baby's health as well as your own. You need to know that in emergencies such as hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and blizzards, your baby will have food. You need to know that breastfeeding helps with

child spacing. Breastfeeding costs almost nothing and allows you yourself to make the best food for your baby. Feeding formula costs a lot.

Learning about breastfeeding before your baby arrives will help you get off to a good start. It will help you make the best choice for you and your family. You will know that you can breastfeed:

- If your baby is born early
- If you and your baby are separated
- If you have to return to work or school

4) Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within 30 minutes of birth (one hour in U.S.).

Your baby will be born knowing how to breastfeed! When your baby is placed right on your skin, he will begin to look for your breast. He may even crawl to the breast and latch on with little or no help. When your baby has this skin-to-skin time right after birth, he will probably feed well at that time and happily ever after. If you had medicine during your labor or birth, your baby may not breastfeed right away. Holding your baby skin-to-skin will help your baby to wake up and learn to feed well.

5) Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation, even if they are separated from their infants.

Choosing a Baby-Friendly hospital means that the staff will know how to help you get off to a good start with breastfeeding. If you and your baby must be apart for any reason, hospital workers will teach you how to keep making milk by using your hands or a breast pump to remove the milk from your breasts.

- Mothers who choose not to breastfeed for any reason, receive one-on-one instruction from a health worker about how to prepare infant formula safely.



6) Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.

- In most cases, breast milk is the only food that your baby will need during the hospital stay. Giving even sips of water, tea, or formula can make your baby breastfeed less often. Breastfeeding very often in the first days of life will help you to make plenty of milk. More breastfeeds means more milk.
- It is good to know that in a Baby-Friendly Hospital, babies only get formula when it is needed for a medical reason. Most babies don't need it at all.

7) Practice “rooming in”—allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.

During the first days after birth, you and your baby will learn to “talk” to one another. Your little one will tell you she is ready to feed with cues such as smacking lips, turning to your breast, and sucking on her hands. You will learn to answer your baby by bringing her to your breast. This dance between you and your baby makes sure that you baby's needs are met and your body makes plenty of warm, sweet milk.

8) Encourage breastfeeding on demand.

One of your baby's first jobs is to learn to eat when hungry or thirsty and stop when satisfied. This is a lesson important for all of life! You help your baby learn this by offering your breast when he acts hungry. This is why it is so important to learn your baby's feeding cues. When you do this, your body will make the right amount of milk and your baby will take just the right amount. Every time your baby shows signs of being ready to feed, that is the right time to breastfeed. You do not need a clock for breastfeeding.

9) Give no pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants.

Your baby will love to suck! During the first days and weeks, it is important that your baby's sucking needs are met at your

breast. This will help you make plenty of milk. Your baby's suck tells your body to make milk. If you baby sucks on a dummy (pacifier) or a bottle, your body will not get the message to make milk.

10) Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.

Most new mothers feel unsure at times. They grow more confident when sharing their fears and feelings with other mothers. You may have questions after leaving the hospital and will want to know where you can turn to find good answers. Breastfeeding support groups can meet those needs. Peer counselors can also help support new mothers with breastfeeding. Peer counselors and support group leaders are experienced mothers from the community. They have learned how to help other mothers to breastfeed. In a Baby-Friendly hospital, staff will make sure you know where to find breastfeeding help once you are home.

Baby-Friendly hospitals must also pay fair market value for formula, nipples, and feeding bottles. This is so that hospitals will not be influenced by formula companies. Baby-Friendly hospitals do not give mothers “gifts” from formula companies. These gifts often make mothers think that they are supposed to give formula. The role of hospitals and birth centers is to promote and support health for patients, not market for formula companies.

Giving birth in a Baby-Friendly hospital can help you and your baby get the best start by breastfeeding. More and more hospitals are working toward Baby-Friendly status. Find if the hospitals in your area have the Baby-Friendly designation—you can do this by asking an IBCLC, or checking with the Baby-Friendly organization in your country.

Find Help Fast

An IBCLC is an “International Board Certified Lactation Consultant:” someone with special training to help breastfeeding families. Go to “Find a Lactation Consultant” at www.ilca.org, to locate a lactation consultant in your area. You can also ask your doctor or a nurse at your hospital.

Your local lactation consultant: