

BABY-FRIENDLY HOSPITAL INITIATIVE

Setting a powerful example for new mothers through hospitals and maternity units

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), launched in 1991, is an effort by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation to ensure that all maternities, whether free standing or in a hospital, become centers of breastfeeding support.

A maternity facility can be designated 'baby-friendly' only when it does not accept free or low-cost breastmilk substitutes, feeding bottles or teats, and has implemented **10 specific steps** to support successful breastfeeding.

'Baby-Friendly' may be used only by maternity services that have passed external assessment according to the Global Criteria for the BFHI. The term "Baby-Friendly" is not appropriately applied to other medical services, community activities, workplaces or commercial products.

INTRODUCING BFHI NATIONALLY

A "Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Implementation Guide" was developed by UNICEF and WHO to help countries introduce BFHI nationally for the benefit of their children and women. Amongst others, the Guide provides the Global Criteria and outlines how to transform hospital practices to become baby friendly.

National breastfeeding authorities use this Guide to promote and implement BFHI in country. National authorities are also responsible for the certification of BFHI status, and review to ensure that certified hospitals comply to the Global Criteria.

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one half-hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed and maintain lactation, even if they should be separated from their infants.

10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding

6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming in - that is, allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.