



Breastfeeding and the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative

Breastfeeding is widely recognized by authorities as the optimal feeding method for infants, as it affords infants, children, and mothers many health benefits. Breastfeeding provides a protective effect against respiratory illnesses, ear infections, gastrointestinal diseases and allergies including asthma, eczema and atopic dermatitis.¹⁻³ Infants who are not breastfed are 36% more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), 22% more likely to be overweight or obese as children, and at increased risk for developing leukemia, diabetes, and asthma. Mothers that choose not to breastfeed are also at increased risk for developing ovarian cancer, breast cancer, diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

Even with all of these known risks, many mothers do not breastfeed their infants. In Illinois, 70.6% of mothers begin breastfeeding their infants after birth, but only 35% continue to exclusively breastfeed at three months.⁴ These rates fall well below the Healthy People 2020 goals for breastfeeding initiation (81.9%) and exclusivity through three months (46.2%). Implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in all Chicago hospitals will help Illinois and Chicago mothers reach these goals.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative

The BFHI was created in 1991 by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to foster maternity care practices that promote and support breastfeeding. Today, over 20,000 maternity and infant care facilities in 156 countries are designated as Baby-Friendly Hospitals.

In the United States, momentum for the BFHI is growing. In fact, over 400 hospitals in the United States are currently in the process of applying for Baby-Friendly designation, and many more are

The Baby-Friendly Steps for the United States:

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in the skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within an hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed and maintain lactation, even if separated from their infant.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming in – allowing mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand (encourage feeding on cue).
9. Give no pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers on discharge.

working to improve their breastfeeding practices. However, there are currently only two Baby-Friendly hospitals in Illinois, and none in Chicago.

There is overwhelming evidence to support the positive impact that achieving Baby-Friendly hospital designation has on mothers, babies, and hospitals.^{5,6} Hospitals that implement the Ten Steps for Successful Breastfeeding, or even just a few of the steps, demonstrate dramatic increases in breastfeeding rates of initiation, exclusivity, and duration. For example, at Boston Medical Center, breastfeeding initiation rates rose from 58% to 87% during Baby-Friendly implementation in 1999.⁷ Still,



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many hospitals receive lucrative incentives from formula companies, a hurdle that impedes BFHI participation. In addition, launching a BFHI takes a commitment from hospital leadership as well as all staff who support the maternity unit, as the development of hospital policy and the execution of BFHI training takes significant time and resources.

In spite of this, BFHI implementation provides a high return on investment for hospitals. Hospitals benefit from quality improvement, cost containment, public relations, and prestige. For example, increased breastfeeding rates can impact hospital costs related to a reduction in postpartum complications and pediatric readmissions.⁸ Furthermore, providing this optimal level of mother-baby care allows hospitals to market themselves as leaders in maternity care. Meeting the needs of families by implementing evidence-based practices to support breastfeeding can improve patient satisfaction and impact hospital choice made by patients.

In order to achieve official Baby-Friendly hospital designation, facilities must meet the requirements for the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding (the “Baby-Friendly Steps”) as outlined by WHO/UNICEF.⁹ The Steps are evidence-based practices and outline policies and procedures that maternity facilities must adopt to promote and support breastfeeding.

Chicago Hospitals that are Registered with Baby-Friendly USA:

- Holy Cross Hospital
- Mount Sinai Hospital
- Norwegian American Hospital
- Prentice Women’s Hospital/
Northwestern Memorial Hospital
- Resurrection Medical Center
- Roseland Community Hospital
- Saint Anthony Hospital
- Saint Joseph Hospital
- University of Illinois Hospital

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative in Chicago

Healthy Places is a city-wide obesity prevention project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that is implemented by the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC). As part of this initiative, *Healthy Places* is working with HealthConnect One and the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to assist Chicago maternity hospitals in improving their support and promotion of breastfeeding through implementation of the BFHI.

Healthy Places has connected with all 19 maternity centers in Chicago and is working with them to form multi-disciplinary breastfeeding committees, garner support for implementing breastfeeding quality improvement projects, revise infant feeding policies, and provide education to staff and physicians about breastfeeding. This strategic outreach and implementation plan has resulted in nine (47%) Chicago hospitals registering with Baby-Friendly USA to take steps to become officially designated as Baby-Friendly hospitals. Additionally, other hospitals have secured letters of support from upper-level administration for implementation of breastfeeding supportive practice changes or have convened multi-disciplinary breastfeeding committees to plan and implement breastfeeding practice changes. Many hospitals are revising their breastfeeding policies and developing staff training programs about breastfeeding to incrementally implement Baby-Friendly Steps, such as initiating skin to skin contact immediately following delivery. In addition to individual hospital progress, many perinatal centers and health systems are requiring each hospital in their network to implement breastfeeding quality improvement projects in 2012 and 2013, including the University of Chicago Perinatal Network, the Rush Perinatal Network, and the Advocate Health Care Hospital System.

Healthy Places is also working to increase breastfeeding awareness, education, and services at the community level. ACCESS Community Health Network in Rogers Park, Heartland Human Care Services in Englewood and the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) in Chicago Lawn are



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funded to educate families about the importance of breastfeeding, inform businesses and worksites about Illinois lactation laws, and implement worksite lactation programs. They are also promoting awareness of the BFHI among community members and working with local hospitals to establish or connect local breast-feeding support resources to community members.

Legislative Support for Breastfeeding Mothers

A leading reason women stop breastfeeding earlier than recommended is because their workplaces don't provide the break time or the private space needed to express milk. Employer barriers to accommodating these needs include lost productivity due to breaks as well as construction costs associated with creating private breastfeeding rooms. However, evidence shows that supporting breastfeeding mothers at the workplace results in lower health care costs, employees taking less sick time, and the ability to retain experienced women as employees.

To encourage employers to support breastfeeding employees, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) includes provisions requiring employers to provide nursing mothers with break time and a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion to express milk at work up until a child's first birthday. The Wage and Hour Division at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is responsible for implementing this new requirement, which took effect in 2011. Although this provision applies only to the hourly workers covered by Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the DOL is encouraging employers to fulfill these requirements for salaried staff. Under the ACA, the President also delegated authority for these same provisions to be provided to the federal civilian workforce. Also at the federal level, the Child Nutrition Act (2010) strengthens the role of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides mothers with breastfeeding resources, support, and supplies.

At the state level, two efforts seek to expand the BFHI. Representative Robyn Gabel introduced the Hospital Infant Feeding Act (HB 4968), a bill requiring every hospital with birthing services to adopt an infant feeding policy that promotes breastfeeding, and for this policy to be routinely communicated to staff in the hospital's obstetric and neonatal areas. This bill is expected to pass the House and proceed to the Senate for consideration. In addition, Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) will be working to promote the BFHI statewide through their CDC Community Transformation Grant.

Chicago Department of Public Health Initiatives

CDPH is moving forward with implementing its own breastfeeding promotion policies. These policies include: (1) encouraging the passage of a City ordinance that prohibits discrimination against breastfeeding in public places, and (2) working with insurance agencies to implement policy changes to support preconception/ interconceptional care, education and breastfeeding practices for mothers. To supplement these local policy initiatives, CDPH is also actively supporting the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition communication tool, Text4baby. Text4baby supports mothers by providing positive health messages and tips via text, including breastfeeding support. CDPH will continue to monitor and support implementation of the BFHI in Chicago.

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