

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

Protecting, promoting and supporting
breastfeeding in facilities providing
maternity and newborn services: the revised
**BABY-FRIENDLY
HOSPITAL INITIATIVE**



2018

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Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services: implementing the revised Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative 2018.

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Foreword

It is estimated that over 820,000 deaths among children under age 5 could be prevented worldwide every year if all children were adequately breastfed. Breastfeeding promotes brain development, reduces the risk of obesity in children, and protects women against breast and ovarian cancer and diabetes. Facilities that provide maternity and newborn services have a unique role in providing new mothers and babies with the timely and appropriate support and encouragement they need to breastfeed successfully, saving governments money while saving lives.

Almost 30 years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) came together to advocate for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services. The 1989 Joint WHO-UNICEF statement included a list of measures that came to be known as the Ten Steps.

Translated into more than 25 languages, the joint WHO-UNICEF Statement became the centrepiece for the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative. Since 1991, maternity wards and hospitals applying the Ten Steps have been designated "Baby-friendly" to draw public attention to their support for sound infant-feeding practices.

To date, nearly all the countries of the world have implemented the BFHI, helping save infants' lives and support mothers' health. But many countries still struggle to maintain the programme and take it to full scale.

Starting in 2015, WHO and UNICEF coordinated a process to review the scientific evidence behind the Ten Steps and to strengthen implementation of the Initiative, which included systematic literature reviews, a thorough examination of the success factors and challenges of the BFHI, and a BFHI Congress in 2016, at which 130 countries came together to discuss the new directions needed to reach universal coverage and sustainability of the BFHI.

The updated guidance published here reflects this collaborative effort to build a more robust programme that will sustain improved quality of care over time. It describes practical steps that countries can and must take to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services. The guidance emphasizes the importance of applying the Ten Steps in all facilities, for all babies, whether premature or full term, born in private or public facilities, or in rich or poor countries.

WHO and UNICEF are committed to supporting breastfeeding as an effective and cost-effective way to promote the survival, nutrition, growth and development of infants and young children, to protect the health and well-being of their mothers, and to help all children to reach their full potential. We believe the Ten Steps offer health facilities and health workers around the world the guidance they need to help more mothers to successfully breastfeed. Together, we can give every newborn the healthiest start in life.



Dr. Tedros Adhanom
Director-General of the World Health
Organization (WHO)



Henrietta H. Fore
Executive Director of the United Nations International
Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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