

GUIDELINE

Protecting, promoting and supporting
BREASTFEEDING IN FACILITIES
providing maternity and newborn services



2017



**World Health
Organization**

GUIDELINE:

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Guideline: protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services.

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Publication history

This guideline, *Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services* is an update of, and supersedes, the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, as published in a joint statement by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) *Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding: the special role of maternity services* in 1989. This complements the operational guidance of the *Innocenti Declaration on the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding*, published in 1990 and the *Innocenti Declaration 2005 on infant and young child feeding*, published in 2005. It also complements some of the implementation guidance of the *Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative*, published in 1991 and updated in 2009 (only inasmuch as aspects of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding remain unchanged).

In order to produce this guideline, the rigorous procedures described in the *WHO handbook for guideline development* were followed. This document presents the direct and indirect evidence, as well as the qualitative reviews that served to inform the recommendations herein. It expands the sections on dissemination as well as those on ethical and equity considerations, summarized in the most recent reviews those on these topics.

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Guideline¹: protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services

Executive summary

Breastfeeding is the cornerstone of child survival, nutrition and development and maternal health. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, followed by continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary foods for up to 2 years or beyond.² In 2012, the World Health Assembly Resolution 65.6 endorsed a [Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition](#),³ specifying six global nutrition targets for 2025, one of which is to increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months up to at least 50%.

In order to support women and optimize the chances of breastfeeding in line with WHO's recommendations, WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) published a joint statement in 1989 on [Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding: the special role of maternity services](#),⁴ which listed Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. The Ten Steps were re-emphasized in the [Innocenti Declaration on the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding](#), adopted in Florence, Italy in 1990,⁵ and the [Innocenti Declaration 2005 on infant and young child feeding](#), published in 2005.⁶ They became part of the [Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative](#), published in 1991, and the updated version in 2009.⁷

The [Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative](#) provides guidance on the implementation, training, monitoring, assessment and re-assessment of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and the [International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes](#),⁸ a set of recommendations to regulate the marketing of breast-milk substitutes, feeding bottles and teats adopted by the 34th World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1981, and its [subsequent related WHA resolutions](#).⁹ The [Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative](#) has since been shown to positively impact breastfeeding outcomes as a whole, and with a dose-response relationship between the number of interventions the mother is exposed to and the likelihood of improved breastfeeding outcomes.

This guideline examines each of the practices in the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, in order to bring together evidence and considerations to inform practice. The scope of the guideline is limited to specific practices that could be implemented in facilities providing maternity and newborn services to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

1 This publication is a World Health Organization (WHO) guideline. A WHO guideline is any document, whatever its title, containing WHO recommendations about health interventions, whether they be clinical, public health or policy interventions. A standard guideline is produced in response to a request for guidance in relation to a change in practice, or controversy in a single clinical or policy area, and is

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