

# Baby Friendly Initiative

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The Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) is the Canadian expression of what is known in the rest of the world as the Baby Friendly Hospitals Initiative (BFHI). The BFHI was launched in 1991 by the World Health Organization and Unicef<sup>1</sup> “to help motivate facilities providing maternity and newborn services worldwide to implement the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding”<sup>2</sup> which includes compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes<sup>3</sup>. These WHO infographics<sup>4</sup> can help parents understand the Ten Steps:



<sup>1</sup> *BFI in Canada*. Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/en/baby-friendly-initiative/>

<sup>2</sup> *Ten steps to successful breastfeeding*. World Health Organization. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/food-and-nutrition-actions-in-health-systems/ten-steps-to-successful-breastfeeding>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.



### 3 ANTENATAL CARE

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Discussing the importance of breastfeeding for babies and mothers
- Preparing women in how to feed their baby

World Health Organization unicef

### 4 CARE RIGHT AFTER BIRTH

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Encouraging skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby soon after birth
- Helping mothers to put their baby to the breast right away

World Health Organization unicef

### 5 SUPPORT MOTHERS WITH BREASTFEEDING

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Checking positioning, attachment and suckling
- Giving practical breastfeeding support
- Helping mothers with common breastfeeding problems

World Health Organization unicef

### 6 SUPPLEMENTING

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Giving only breast milk unless there are medical reasons
- Prioritizing donor human milk when a supplement is needed
- Helping mothers who want to formula feed to do so safely

World Health Organization unicef



### 7 ROOMING-IN

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Letting mothers and babies stay together day and night
- Making sure that mothers of sick babies can stay near their baby

World Health Organization unicef

### 8 RESPONSIVE FEEDING

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Helping mothers know when their baby is hungry
- Not limiting breastfeeding times

World Health Organization unicef

### 9 BOTTLES, TEATS AND PACIFIERS

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Counsel mothers on the use and risks of feeding bottles, teats, and pacifiers

World Health Organization unicef

### 10 DISCHARGE

Hospitals support mothers to breastfeed by...

- Referring mothers to community resources for breastfeeding support
- Working with communities to improve breastfeeding support services

World Health Organization unicef



The [Breastfeeding Committee for Canada](#) is “The National Authority for Baby-Friendly Initiative”<sup>5</sup> and has published a list of [BFI Designated facilities as of January 4, 2021](#) <sup>6</sup>

Parents are often surprised to find out how few Canadian hospitals are designated Baby Friendly, and are sometimes surprised to learn that CEO’s of local hospitals may not be familiar with the Baby Friendly Initiative.

If any of the 10 Steps for Successful Breastfeeding were left out where you gave birth, you may have a role to play in helping the parents of the future. Consider taking a moment now to find the contact information for the senior staff person at the institution where you gave birth and bookmarking it in case you decide to write to him or her. You might also want to congratulate the head of an institution that did a great job, or celebrate those of the 10 Steps that were followed. Many health institution websites publish relevant contact information under a “Contact Us” button.

If you do choose to write to the head of a health care institution, consider referencing studies which demonstrate how breastfeeding saves their institution money:

*Costs of Necrotizing Enterocolitis and Cost-Effectiveness of Exclusively Human Milk-Based Products in Feeding Extremely Premature Infants* Vaidyanathan Ganapathy, Joel W. Hay, and Jae H. Kim, 6 Feb 2012 Breastfeeding Medicine Breastfeeding Medicine Vol. 7, No. 1. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. (2020, July 13). Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/en/>

<sup>6</sup> Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. (n.d.). *Baby-Friendly Facilities in Canada (Compiled January 4, 2021)*. Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-January-Designated-Facilities-in-Canada-en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ganapathy, V., Kim, J. H., & Hay, J. W. (2012, February 6). *Costs of Necrotizing Enterocolitis and Cost-Effectiveness of Exclusively Human Milk-Based Products in Feeding Extremely Premature Infants*. Mary Ann Liebert Inc. Publishers. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/bfm.2011.0002>



*Infant feeding mode predicts the costs of healthcare services in one region of Canada: A Data Linkage Pilot Study*, Taylor, A., Chowdhury, S., Gao, Z., Van Nguyen, H., Midodzi, W., Gill, N., Halfyard, B., Newhook, L. A., & Twells, L. (2020). BMC Research Notes, 13(1). <sup>8</sup>

Canada's health care system is decentralized, so your voice matters more than you can imagine!

If you do choose to write a letter or send a message, know that it's normal for emotions to run high - consider taking a break before re-reading, revising and finalizing your message. It can be helpful to remember that you are writing to an actual human being leading an institution that may be stretched beyond capacity; adopting a respectful tone is recommended.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

*Margaret Mead*<sup>9</sup>

Related articles: [Public Policy, Breastfeeding & You](#) & [The Code and You](#)

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, A., Chowdhury, S., Gao, Z., Van Nguyen, H., Midodzi, W., Gill, N., Halfyard, B., Newhook, L. A. A., & Twells, L. (2020, August 15). *Infant feeding mode predicts the costs of healthcare services in one region of Canada: A Data Linkage Pilot Study* - BMC Research notes. BioMed Central. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-020-05228-6>

<sup>9</sup> Brainy Quote. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2022, from [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/margaret\\_mead\\_100502](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/margaret_mead_100502)