

The New Brunswick Department of Health Breastfeeding Policy Statement

The Department of Health recognizes breastfeeding as an essential population health strategy and supports the recommendation: Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life followed by the introduction of complementary foods and continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond¹.

The Department of Health advocates for breastfeeding as the optimal method of feeding in the first years of life because of the nutritional, immunological, social, and psychological benefits of the breastfeeding process for the mother and child. Breastfeeding is affordable, readily available and provides all the nutrients for infants meaning a secure source of nutrition regardless of income or circumstance. Additionally, breastfeeding has little to no impact on the environment and has the potential to save the health care system millions of dollars².

Breastfeeding is a human right and as such, it is essential to create an environment that protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding³. It is the responsibility of government, healthcare facilities, families, community agencies, organizations, businesses and the community at large to work together to achieve this.

The Department of Health is committed to improving breastfeeding rates in New Brunswick and implementing recognized quality initiatives to achieve that goal. The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is an evidence-based integrated approach for hospitals and community health services that provides ten steps and the WHO Code to optimally support maternal-child health. The BFI facilitates the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding and has been proven effective to increase breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity⁴.

Therefore, all New Brunswick Hospitals, Public Health Offices and Community Health Centres working with mothers, babies and their families shall undertake steps towards achieving the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) designation.

All employees and volunteers in the healthcare system^a shall promote the recommendation: Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life followed by the introduction of complementary foods and continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond.

^a *Healthcare system refers to the Department of Health and Regional Health Authorities*

1. World Health Organization and UNICEF. (2003). Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Geneva: World Health Organization.
2. Nigel C Rollins, Nita Bhandari, Nemat Hajeebhoy, Susan Horton, Chessa K Lutter, Jose C Martines, Eln G Piwoz, Linda M Richter, Cesar G Victora, The Lancet Breastfeeding Series Group. Why invest, and what it will take to improve breastfeeding practices? The Lancet, Volume 387, Issue 10017, 2016, pp. 491-504
3. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11
4. Kramer MS ,Chalmers B, Hodnett ED,et al for the PROBIT Study Group (2001).Promotion of breastfeeding intervention trial(PROBIT): a randomized trial in the Republic of Belarus. JAMA 2001 Jan24/31; 285: 413–20