



WNHS POLICY

Breastfeeding

Scope (Staff) All staff

Scope (Area) All areas

Summary The Women and Newborn Health Service (WNHS) Breastfeeding Policy provides guidance to staff on the promotion, support and encouragement of breastfeeding.

This version of the policy has been updated to the new WNHS policy template, procedural content has been separated into a supporting procedure and minor amendments have been made throughout in line with contemporary evidence based best-practice including 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding'.

Approval Clinical Governance Committee

Sponsor Director of Midwifery, Nursing and Patient Support Services

Contact Clinical Midwife Consultant, Breastfeeding Centre

Version 5.0

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NSQHS Standards Clinical Governance (Std 1)
Partnering with Consumers (Std 2)
Preventing and Controlling Healthcare-Associated Infection (Std 3)
Communicating for Safety (Std 6)

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1. Aim

The Women and Newborn Health Service (WNHS) Breastfeeding Policy informs staff to enable promotion, support and encouragement of breastfeeding as the optimal way for a woman to feed her baby. The Policy aims to:

- Ensure the health benefits of breastfeeding and the potential health risks associated with breast milk substitute feeding are discussed with all women and their families, so they can make an informed choice about how they will feed their babies.
- Enable Women and Newborn Health Service (WNHS) staff to create an environment for women to breastfeed their babies, and ensure they are given sufficient information and support to enable them to breastfeed exclusively for six months, and then as a part of their infant's diet beyond the first year of life.
- Promote consistency between all health professionals and develop a breastfeeding culture throughout WNHS to avoid conflicting advice.
- Ensure consistent, comprehensive, evidence based breastfeeding information and support is provided to parents by all health care professionals working in WNHS.
- Adhere to the World Health Organization (WHO) Code of marketing of breast milk substitutes.
- Ensure WNHS demonstrates a commitment to breastfeeding by maintaining BFHI accreditation status for King Edward Memorial Hospital and Osborne Park Hospital (KEMH and OPH).

2. Background

The Women and Newborn Health Service (WNHS) Breastfeeding Policy promotes, supports and encourages breastfeeding as the optimal way for a woman to feed her baby. WNHS acknowledges that breastfeeding offers important health benefits for both the mother and child.

WNHS recognises and supports the importance of creating and delivering a health care environment where breastfeeding is encouraged, promoted and supported by all staff to parents.

WNHS maternity facilities are to follow and appropriately educate and train all staff on the 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding'. WNHS staff should not discriminate against any woman in her chosen method of infant feeding and are to fully support her when she has made that choice.

The policy recognises that all mothers have the right to receive clear and impartial information to enable them to make a fully informed choice as to how they feed and care for their babies after birth. Mothers are to be supported to feed their infants in all areas of the WNHS. Signs are to be displayed throughout WNHS informing all staff and parents that breastfeeding is welcome.

Staff members wishing to return to work while continuing to breastfeed are entitled to flexible lactation breaks and management support. Refer to the [NMHS Employee Breastfeeding Policy](#).

3. Risk

Non-compliance with this policy will breach the recognised global standard supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Children's Fund (UCF) and may impact on the accreditation of WNHS as a Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) organisation. Further, non-compliance with this policy may impact quality of patient care.



4. Policy Principles

All WNHS staff are required to adhere to the WNHS Breastfeeding Policy to avoid conflicting advice. Any deviation from the policy must be justified and recorded as a variance of care in the mother's and/or the baby's healthcare record.

The Breastfeeding Policy is to be used by all WNHS staff, in conjunction with the WNHS Breastfeeding Procedure (link to follow) and the [WNHS Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clinical Guideline for Newborn Feeding and Maternal Lactation](#).

The policy is directed to mothers of healthy babies born at term. If a baby is unwell or pre-term it may require more flexible practices in relation to feeding. It is the responsibility of all health professionals to liaise with the baby's medical attendants (paediatrician, general practitioner) if concerns arise about the baby's health.

The Policy and Breast Milk Substitute Feeding

Parents who have made a fully informed choice to feed their babies with breast milk substitute are to be shown how to prepare breast milk substitute feeds correctly, on an individual basis in the postnatal period. No group instruction is to be provided. Parents are to be supported in their decision.

The Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) Overview

BFHI is a joint World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Children's Fund (UNICEF) project. The aim is to give every baby the best start in life by creating a health care environment where breastfeeding is the norm and practices known to promote the health and well-being of all babies and their mothers are followed.

The ten steps to successful breastfeeding are the global standard by which healthcare facilities are assessed and accredited. A 'baby friendly' facility is one where mother's informed choice of feeding is encouraged, respected and supported.

Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding

The following policy principles reflect the key elements of the '[Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#)'. These should be read in conjunction with the [WNHS Breastfeeding Procedure](#) which provides procedural advice for staff on how to support and implement the Ten Steps.

- 1a) Have a written infant feeding policy that is routinely communicated to staff and parents.
- 1b) Comply with the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* and relevant *World Health Assembly* resolutions.
- 1c) Establish ongoing monitoring and data-management systems.
- 2) Ensure that staff have sufficient knowledge, competence and skills to support breastfeeding.
- 3) Discuss the importance and management of breastfeeding with pregnant women and their families.
- 4) Facilitate immediate and uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact and support mothers to recognise when their babies are ready to breastfeed, offering help if needed.



- 5) Support mothers to initiate and maintain breastfeeding and manage common difficulties.
- 6) Do not provide breastfed newborns any food or fluids other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
- 7) Enable mothers and their infants to remain together and to practise rooming-in 24 hours a day
- 8) Support mothers to recognise and respond to their infants' cues for feeding.
- 9) Counsel mothers on the use and risk of feeding bottles, teats and pacifiers.
- 10) Coordinate discharge so that parents and their infants have timely access to ongoing support and care.

5. Compliance and Evaluation

All staff members who give breastfeeding advice to mothers and families will have completed the necessary education and maintain the standards set down within the [Baby Friendly Health Initiative accreditation requirements](#). This is to be reviewed and documented by hospital clinical management.

All women are provided with the opportunity to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their infants. Data is to be collected according to the [Baby Friendly Health Initiative accreditation requirements](#).

Improved breastfeeding rates by promoting awareness of the [Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#).

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy by hospital clinical management.

6. Document Control

Version	Amendment(s)	TRIM Ref	Published Date
1.0	Published version		19/05/2010
2.0	Three yearly review		January 2014
3.0	Three yearly review		February 2017
3.1	Reviewed following rescindment of WA Health Policy		June 2018
4.0	Three yearly review		October 2019
5.0	Three yearly review, update to new template, separate procedural aspects into supporting document, minor updates in line with Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding	D/22/184267	November 2022



Related policies, procedures and guidelines

[WNHS Breastfeeding Procedure](#)

[WNHS Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clinical Guideline: Newborn Feeding and Maternal Lactation](#)

[WNHS Department of Nursing and Midwifery Education and Research Procedure: Baby Friendly Health Initiative \(BFHI\): Professional Development Requirements for Staff](#)

[NMHS Policy: Employee Breastfeeding Policy](#)

References

[Marketing Infant Formula in Australia](#)

[Infant Feeding Guidelines: Information for health workers \(2012\)](#)

[Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2019 and Beyond](#)

[World Health Organization: Protecting, promoting and supporting breast-feeding: the special role of maternity services](#)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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