



Let's celebrate National Breastfeeding Week (October 1-7)!

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network that protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding worldwide. Each year WABA selects a theme for World Breastfeeding Week and the 2022 theme is **Step Up for Breastfeeding: Educate and Support**

How can health care facilities step up for breastfeeding?

- Learn about the Baby-Friendly Initiative and begin to implement the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding in Canada*. The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BFION's parent organization) has a coach mentor program where you can receive individual help at no cost!. Learn more at www.breastfeedingcanada.ca
- Connect with other healthcare providers who are interested in the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding. Join BFION. The cost is minimal and the returns are great! See <https://www.bfiontario.ca/members-area/become-a-member/>
- Have staff who work with prenatal, birthing and postpartum families do a self-appraisal of their competency. The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada's website has links to helpful competency verification toolkits! Visit <https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/en/baby-friendly-initiative/>
- Look around your workplace and see if there is any signage that shows breastfeeding is welcome in public places such as waiting areas. The universal symbol welcoming breastfeeding can be found at <https://universalbreastfeedingsymbol.com/>

How can health care providers step up for breastfeeding?

- Organize a group of breastfeeding parents and participate in the Quintessence Challenge. Learn more at <https://www.babyfriendly.ca/about-challenge> "Latch on" events help to increase public awareness of the importance of breastfeeding!
- Take a stand against misleading and aggressive marketing of infant formula, bottles and artificial nipples. Work with management to clear your workplace of brochures, measuring tapes, weigh scale paper and other products that have commercial endorsements from companies that make or distribute infant formula and feeding equipment. Do not distribute formula samples or coupons to new mothers and families with infants. Free samples and coupons are product endorsement and encourage use of the product.
- Review the literature and resources that you share with parents. Are the materials factual and evidence based or are they provided by a company that makes infant formula or infant feeding equipment? Helpful screening tools can be found at:
Abbreviated tool:

<https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PHAC-abbreviated-screening-tool-En.pdf>

More comprehensive tool

<https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Comprehensive-screening-tool-for-resources-Feb-2018-En.pdf>

How can workplaces step up for breastfeeding?

- Does your workplace have a policy that supports breastfeeding when an employee returns to work after maternity leave? If there is a policy, do staff know about it? If there isn't a policy, advocate with other employees for one to be made.
- Find out about breastfeeding resources in your community and share the information with colleagues who are expecting a baby.
- Be supportive when an employee needs to breastfeed or express milk at the workplace.
- Help other workplaces establish policies that support breastfeeding families.

How can individuals and families step up for breastfeeding?

- When you see someone breastfeeding look at them, smile and say something positive.
- If you know someone who is breastfeeding contact them and see if you can help in any way. Maybe you could run an errand, provide some healthy snacks or a meal, or do a household task. The little things that you do matter a lot!
- If you have children, talk to them about infant feeding and how breastmilk best suits the needs of babies.
- Encourage public places such as libraries, arenas, restaurants and shopping centres to display the universal breastfeeding symbol that lets everyone know that breastfeeding is welcome. The universal breastfeeding symbol can be found at <https://universalbreastfeedingsymbol.com/>

If I step up for breastfeeding, am I stepping down for families that feed infant formula?

The Baby-Friendly Initiative protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding but also recognizes that

- Some families need to feed infant formula for a medical reason;
- Some families decide to feed infant formula for personal reasons;
- Factual information with no commercial endorsements is needed to help families make informed infant feeding decisions and to feed their babies a safe product in a safe way.
- All families benefit from support.

Although our bodies are made to provide milk to our babies, mothers and babies need to learn the art of breastfeeding and what works best for them. This can sometimes be challenging and research shows us that many mothers do not reach their breastfeeding goals. Support can make a huge difference! If we can create an enabling environment to breastfeed, more mothers and families will breastfeed and breastfeed longer. If everyone did a little to protect, promote and support breastfeeding it would make a tremendous difference!

What are the breastfeeding rates in Canada?

- 91% of mothers initiate breastfeeding
- Among mothers who initiate breastfeeding, approximately 15% stop before 1 month and 22% stop between 1 and 6 months.

Health Canada recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed until 6 months of age and then continue breastfeeding, with the additional of appropriate complementary foods, up to age 2 years and beyond.

Our exclusive breastfeeding rate at 6 months is 34.5%

Our any breastfeeding rate (some breastmilk but other fluids/foods as well) at 6 months is approximately 62%

This shows the need to protect, promote and support breastfeeding!

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2017-2018

Visit the Baby-Friendly Initiative Ontario (BFI Ontario) website to learn more about supporting the Baby-Friendly Initiative at <https://www.bfiontario.ca/>

You can also visit us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!