

Baby Friendly Hospitals

The initiative “Baby Friendly Hospitals” started in 1991 as an effort to reinsure that all mother care services, be it individual services or hospitals, will support mothers to make the right decisions considering their child’s nutrition, uninfluenced by commercial profits. The aim of the initiative is to offer every woman the chance to make sound, health oriented decisions concerning infant nutrition and should they choose breastfeeding, to be supported in their decision to solely breastfeed for 6 months and then the continuation of it, with use of supplements, until the second year of the infant’s life and onwards.

UNICEF and the World Health Organisation established 10 prerequisites that a hospital needs to comply with before it can be named “Baby friendly”:

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one half-hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed and maintain lactation, even if they should be separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming in - that is, allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breastfeeding infants.

10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.



It is worth mentioning that in Greece there is no hospital or private clinic that complies with the steps that UNICEF and the WHO has established.

More information:

<http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk/> - A UNICEF site concerning the initiative "Baby Friendly Hospitals"

<http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/assets/statusbfhi.pdf> - A UNICEF site where you can check which countries have "Baby Friendly Hospitals" and to what extend.