Best Practices in Breastfeeding

Q: What are “best practices” in breastfeeding?
A: The best hospitals strive to follow “best practices.” Research shows that human milk offers the best nutrition for babies. Best practices in breastfeeding means the staff cares for moms and babies in a way that promotes successful breastfeeding. Breastfeeding moms succeed more often when the care team:

- Teaches all pregnant women about the benefits of breastfeeding.
- Helps mothers start breastfeeding within one hour of birth.
- Shows mothers how to breastfeed and how to keep their milk supply up, even if they are apart from their babies.
- Gives only human milk to breastfed babies. (No other food or drink unless there’s a medical need.)
- Helps mothers and babies stay together 24 hours a day. (This is called “rooming in.”)
- Encourages frequent breastfeeding, so moms can make plenty of milk.
- Does not give pacifiers or bottles to babies who are breastfeeding.
- Explains who mothers should call if they need help breastfeeding after they leave the hospital or clinic.

The hospital must also train all members of the care team in the skills they need to follow this policy.

Q: Do all of the Fairview hospitals follow these practices?
A: All of our hospitals are adopting best practices in breastfeeding. The steps listed will soon be in place in all hospitals.

Q: Why is breastfeeding so important?
A: Breastfeeding is healthy for both babies and mothers.

- Your breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. It has all the nutrients your baby needs, plus it has antibodies to help your baby fight common infections (like ear infections and pneumonia).
- It is convenient and does not cost any money.
- It helps protect moms from some kinds of cancer.
- It helps prevent some childhood diseases like diabetes and allergies. It can also help protect your baby from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- It helps moms lose their pregnancy weight faster.

If you are unable to produce enough milk in the hospital, your care team may suggest pasteurized donor human milk for your baby.
Q: Will I be forced to breastfeed, even if I don't want to?

A: Absolutely not! Not all moms wish to breastfeed, and a very few cannot breastfeed for some reason. We will respect and support your choices.

We will discuss the ways in which breastfeeding is the perfect food for your baby: Any amount of breast milk is great—even just one feeding. But if you still prefer to use formula, we will provide the formula and teach you how to feed your baby.

If you breastfeed, it is important to give only human milk and not bottles of formula. This way, your body will make enough milk, and you and your baby will get lots of practice. If you would like to breastfeed but want to try a bottle of formula in the hospital, we will discuss the reasons we do not recommend this.

Q: What else might I notice about best practices in breastfeeding?

A: You will notice the following:

- Soon after birth, if you and your baby are able, we will place your baby on your chest for skin-to-skin contact. This helps your baby stay warm and adjust to life outside the womb. If you plan to breastfeed, we will help you and your baby breastfeed within the first hour after birth.

- The care team will care for you and your baby in your room, except during medical tests and treatments. This is a critical time for getting to know your baby and learning how to care for him or her. It is important to have your baby with you while there are plenty of people around to help you.

- Staying close to your baby night and day will help you make more milk. Also, studies show that both moms and babies sleep better if they sleep in the same room. Your nurses will help you get the extra rest you need.

- We will not give your baby a pacifier unless there is a medical need. Instead, we will teach you many other ways to comfort your baby. When learning to breastfeed, it is best for babies to satisfy their sucking needs at the breast for at least 2 to 4 weeks after birth. This teaches your baby the correct way to latch onto the breast, and it helps you build a good milk supply.

- You’ll get a lot of support for breastfeeding. We will also tell you who to call for support after you get home.

Q: What can I do to make breastfeeding a success?

A: Try the ideas below.

- Get good information about breastfeeding. Call Fairview On Call at 612-672-7272 for details about breastfeeding classes and lactation consultation. Some sites offer financial support if you need it, or insurance may help with the cost.

- Tell friends and family about your decision to breastfeed. Ask for their support.

- Plan ahead to get help with other tasks after your baby is born. This way, you can focus on breastfeeding, resting and caring for yourself.

For more information, go to www.babyfriendlyusa.org, call your clinic’s care team, or speak with a childbirth or breastfeeding educator.