Ten Steps to Support Parents’ Choice to Breastfeed Their Baby

See also:
Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding. The special role of maternity services.

Additional Reading:
This pediatric practice enthusiastically supports parents’ plans to breastfeed their baby. We believe that breastfeeding ensures the best possible health, development, and psychosocial outcomes for your baby. In support of this commitment, we:

1. **Make a commitment to the importance of breastfeeding.**
   - Learn the health benefits associated with breastfeeding, particularly exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of an infant’s life.
   - Endorse breastfeeding as an important preventive health care technique.
   - Understand that breastfeeding functions as a baby’s first and ongoing immunization.
   - Acknowledge that medical skills that protect and sustain breastfeeding are an integral aspect of primary health care.
   - Collect data on breastfeeding initiation and duration in the practice.

2. **Train all physicians and office staff in skills necessary to support breastfeeding.**
   - Motivate and educate our office staff to promote and support breastfeeding.
   - Portray breastfeeding as the normative behavior, using visual images and pro breastfeeding slogans.
   - Develop skill and comfort in evaluating breastfeeding through appropriate history and physical assessment.
   - Develop knowledge and skills in the management of common breastfeeding problems.
   - Know the medical contraindications to breastfeeding.
   - Develop and implement telephone triage protocols compatible with breastfeeding and consistent with current breastfeeding practices and science.
   - Identify at least one breastfeeding resource person on our office staff and facilitate this person’s acquisition of advanced breastfeeding management skills by enabling attendance at educational programs and clinical preceptorships.

3. **Inform women and families about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.**
   - Encourage the development of prenatal breastfeeding classes in our community and encourage expectant parents to attend the class before deciding about infant feeding.
   - Work with maternity care professionals in our area to ensure promotion of breastfeeding during the prenatal period.
   - Work with maternity care professionals in our area to identify patients with potential lactation risk factors (e.g., flat or inverted nipples, previous breast surgery, no change in breast size during pregnancy), recommend appropriate interventions, and encourage early follow-up after delivery.
   - Encourage prenatal visits for expectant parents and discuss infant feeding practices, promoting the advantages of breastfeeding.
   - Provide current breastfeeding educational resources to expectant parents.
4. **Schedule early follow-up visits for all newborns.**
   - Observe mother breastfeeding the newborn. Evaluate for successful breastfeeding and adequacy of milk supply.
   - Evaluate newborn’s state of hydration.
   - Evaluate newborn for jaundice.
   - Educate parents about the normal stool and urine patterns of a breastfed newborn.
   - Gather historical information about feeding activity since birth.
   - Encourage mother and newborn to remain together with minimal interruption until mother’s milk supply and breastfeeding are well-established.
   - Encourage skin-to-skin contact for the newborn even after the family goes home from the hospital.
   - Discourage use of artificial nipples and pacifiers.
   - Inform parents of the importance of feeding a newborn who indicates a desire to suck.
   - If supplements are medically necessary, consider feeding methods that will interfere least with the establishment of successful breastfeeding.

5. **Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation during periods of separation from their babies.**
   - Develop skill in explaining optimal breastfeeding practices and demonstrating correct breastfeeding technique to mothers and families.
   - Provide current breastfeeding educational resources to breastfeeding mothers (eg, videotapes, books, pamphlets).
   - Use sample breastfeeding aids (eg, infant slings, nursing footstools, nursing pillows, breast shells, breast pumps) when instructing new mothers.
   - Provide instruction about expression and storage of breastmilk for mothers who will be separated from their babies.
   - Distribute patient information sheets about expressing and storing breastmilk and about alternative methods of offering expressed breastmilk.

6. **Encourage breastfeeding on demand.**
   - Encourage breastfeeding mothers to feed the infant on cue.
   - Explain the importance of frequent feedings (including nighttime feedings) to help establish and maintain an adequate milk supply.
   - Ensure that office practices promote breastfeeding and do not interrupt or discourage feeding when the infant is in the office.
Use appropriate anticipatory guidance that supports exclusive breastfeeding until infants are approximately 6 months old and encourage the continuation of breastfeeding as long as mutually desired by the mother and baby.

- Provide age-appropriate breastfeeding intervention and anticipatory guidance as part of every routine periodic health screening visit.
- Facilitate breastfeeding practices that optimize the infant’s ability to effectively remove milk from the mother’s breast.
- Evaluate the adequacy of the mother's milk supply at any given time after delivery.
- Learn interventions for stimulating the supply of breastmilk.
- Learn normal variations in the growth patterns of breastfed infants.
- Explain to parents the occurrence of growth spurts and the need to increase breastfeeding frequency during those periods.
- Counsel families about the normal sleep patterns and behaviors of a breastfed baby.
- Instruct parents in alternative soothing activities for fussy infants to avoid early use of pacifiers.
- Discuss the importance of delaying the introduction of solid foods until the infant is approximately 6 months of age.
- Counsel parents about appropriate introduction of solid foods and when use of vitamin and mineral supplements might be recommended.
- Manage common illnesses in breastfed infants to avoid unnecessary interruptions or disruptions of breastfeeding.
- Educate parents about the normal nursing behaviors of the older breastfeeding baby or toddler.
- Provide appropriate instruction about dental hygiene for infants.
- Encourage the employers in our community to adopt workplace practices that are supportive of breastfeeding.
- Counsel mothers about ways to overcome negative social pressures related to breastfeeding.
- Counsel mothers about employment, school, or other related activities and breastfeeding.

Support breastfeeding by providing accurate information about maternal issues.

- Develop skills for evaluating the well-being of the breastfeeding mother and be able to provide or refer for appropriate care.
- Provide current information about breastfeeding and the effect of maternal medications.
- Counsel mothers on the contraindications of illicit drug use and breastfeeding.
- Provide basic nutritional counseling and guidelines to the breastfeeding mother.
- Screen for maternal nutritional problems and refer mothers for nutritional counseling when indicated.
- Pay special attention to mothers on special diets, mothers who have had rapid weight loss, or mothers who desire to lose weight.
- Provide current information about maternal diet and the relationship to the fussy breastfed infant.
- Provide mothers and other health care professionals with current information about the continuation of breastfeeding during maternal illness and when planning to undergo medical or dental procedures.
- Counsel mothers about ways to overcome negative social pressures related to breastfeeding.
- Counsel mothers about employment, school, or other related activities and breastfeeding.
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Communicate support for breastfeeding in the office environment.

• Promote breastfeeding in our office by displaying posters and other visual images that support breastfeeding.
• Remove commercial logos and other indirect formula endorsements (e.g., note pads and pens with brand names, decorative logos, calendars), and store formula supplies out of view.
• Provide noncommercial educational materials on breastfeeding.
• Post signs in the waiting area encouraging breastfeeding mothers to feel free to nurse their babies wherever they are comfortable and whenever they desire.
• Provide a private place in our office for mothers to breastfeed.

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Expand the network of support for breastfeeding.

• Work with the hospital where we attend newborns to implement effective breastfeeding support practices and policies.
• Refer expectant and new parents to breastfeeding support groups, such as La Leche League International, Nursing Mothers' Council, and counselors for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
• Identify local breastfeeding specialists and become knowledgeable about their background and training for the purpose of client referral for extra assistance with breastfeeding difficulties.
• Develop and nurture reciprocal working relationships with the lactation specialists with whom we choose to work.
• Provide in-kind and financial support for local breastfeeding support groups.

Supported in part by Project 6 HO4 MC 0009-02 1 from the Maternal and Child Health program (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services.

Supported by a grant from the FRIENDS OF CHILDREN FUND

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