



BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides services for pregnant women, newborns and women with specialized health needs from across the province. BC Women's is an academic health centre affiliated with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the Women's Health Research Institute. For more information, please visit www.bcwomens.ca.

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, please visit www.phsa.ca.

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MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

BC Women's Hospital designated World Health Organization/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital

Vancouver, B.C. – BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre today became the largest specialized hospital in Canada to be designated a World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital. This designation recognizes BC Women's commitment to enabling mothers to breastfeed their newborn babies giving them the best start in life.

Created by the World Health Organization and UNICEF in 1991, the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative acknowledges hospitals whose maternity services actively promote breastfeeding of babies by new moms. A rigorous assessment was conducted in July by a team that spent 72 consecutive hours on site, interviewing families and staff, and observing care.

"Congratulations to BC Women's on receiving this important designation from the World Health Organization and UNICEF," says Healthy Living and Sport Minister Mary Polak. "Breastfeeding not only provides a strong bond between mother and child but also provides significant long term health benefits for both."

"We are extremely proud of the efforts of the BC Women's team in becoming the largest specialized hospital in Canada to be designated as Baby Friendly," says Wynne Powell, Board Chair, Provincial Health Services Authority. "BC Women's continues to set the standard for maternity care."

Research has shown that breastfeeding provides significant health benefits for both babies and their mothers. Newborns are at less risk of gastro-intestinal infections, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, ear infections, allergy related conditions and insulin-dependent diabetes. Women who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, hip fractures and low bone density as well as type 2 diabetes.

"We take seriously our responsibility to support new mothers in making informed choices about feeding their infants," says Dr. Elizabeth Whynot, President, BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre. "Whether new moms choose to breast or bottle feed our teams of physicians, midwives, nurses and other health care professionals are there to assist."

“We were extremely impressed with the innovative programs BC Women’s offers during our assessment,” says Marianne Brophy, Co-Chair, Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. “It was gratifying to see the engagement at all levels of such a large organization and we are convinced that this excellent quality of care will continue long into the future.”

Each year more 7,500 babies are born at BC Women’s with 85 percent of them being breastfed when they leave hospital. Whether breast or bottle fed, BC Women’s is committed to giving newborn babies the best start in life.

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BACKGROUND

BC Women's Hospital and the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative November 4, 2008

The Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) was launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 1991. It is a global effort for improving the role of maternity services to enable mothers to breastfeed babies for the best start in life. It aims at improving the care of pregnant women, mothers and newborns at health facilities that provide maternity services for protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

WHO Baby Friendly website who.int/nutrition/topics/bfhi/en/index.html.

UNICEF Baby Friendly website unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/baby.htm.

BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre is the tenth and largest facility in Canada to receive the Baby Friendly Hospital designation. The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada is the National Authority for the WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative in Canada. Their website is www.breastfeedingcanada.ca.

BC Women's proudly supports women's informed choices about infant feeding. Many things influence the infant feeding choices women make including attitudes and beliefs of the people around her, personal experiences and complete (or incomplete) information about the choices available. BC Women's goal is to be part of a system that enables women to get as much information and support as they need to make choices they are comfortable with. BC Women's is committed to following the World Health Organization, Health Canada, and British Columbia Perinatal Health Program's recommendations on infant feeding.

BC Women's supports the UNICEF Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding:

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 a half-hour after birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to 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 – 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.

Special Products Distribution Centre

The Special Products Distribution Centre is another service provided by BC Women's to support new mothers. It is a specialty shop that carries an extensive line of nutritional products and feeding-related supplies for individuals under the care of a physician or Registered Dietitian. A referral form is required for some products while standard formulas do not require a prescription. As well, breast pumps are offered for rental. No referral is needed for this service. For more information, visit: www.bcchildrens.ca/spdc.

BC Women's Milk Bank

The BC Women's Milk Bank has operated for over thirty years. It provides pasteurized donor milk to high risk and ill children when their mothers are not able to provide enough breast milk. Donors are healthy mothers who have completed a screening process that are able to produce more milk than their babies need. Pasteurized donor milk is provided with a doctor's or midwife's prescription. For more information, visit: www.bcwomens.ca/HealthTopics/HavingBaby/YourBaby/Breastfeeding.htm#milkbank