

BREASTFEEDING POLICY STATEMENT

Children's Health Ireland endorses the HSE and WHO guidelines supporting exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life followed by continued breastfeeding, with appropriate complementary foods, until the age of two or beyond¹. To support, promote and protect breastfeeding, we aim to:

- Create an environment that welcomes, supports and facilitates breastfeeding².
- Welcome parents who wish to breastfeed in any public area of the hospital, while endeavouring to provide a private area for those who ask for one.
- Endeavour to facilitate the accommodation of siblings who are being breastfed by parents who also wish to be resident with their sick child in the hospital³.
- Discuss the importance of breastfeeding with parents recognising the particular importance of breast milk for sick, small and premature infants.
- Regularly review and update CHI breastfeeding guidelines and policies to reflect the most up to date research evidence on breastfeeding.
- Ensure interventions by healthcare professionals are managed to minimise disturbance to the breastfeeding relationship.
- Facilitate skin to skin and rooming in where infant's clinical condition and facilities allow.
- Ensure parents who are providing breast milk for their children will have access to healthcare professionals who have the knowledge and skills to assist them in establishing and maintaining breastfeeding and breast milk feeding.
- Support parents to initiate and maintain lactation via breastfeeding and/or expressing and to manage the common challenges that may be encountered.
- Support parents to recognise and respond to their infants cues for feeding.
- Abide by the International Code for the Marketing of Breast Milk substitutes, and subsequent WHO resolutions.
- Avoid the use of bottles, teats and soothers whilst establishing breastfeeding, unless required for medical reasons or through parental choice.
- Give expressed breast milk or alternative feed by a feeding method conducive to the establishment of breastfeeding.
- Supply the equipment and information for the safe expression and storage of breast milk, while in hospital.
- Discuss with parents strategies to optimise nutrition and growth in infants who may have altered nutritional requirements, while still prioritising breast milk feeding.
- Provide parents with information on community breastfeeding resources and other support services available to them prior to discharge from hospital.
- Support staff working in the hospital that choose to breastfeed or express breast milk for their child.

1. Department of Health and Children (2005) Breastfeeding in Ireland: A five year Strategic Action Plan Government Publications: Dublin; World Health Organisation and UNICEF. (2003). Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding

2. The term breastfeeding will be used to represent breastfeeding, chest feeding and breastmilk feeding

3. This will be dependent on current public health/local infection control guidelines to protect both other patients and staff

Issue Date: July 2015 / Review Date: January 2022

Next Review Date: January 2025