



TEN STEP TUESDAY

# Step 3: Breastfeeding Support and Education in the Prenatal Setting

## It's Ten Step Tuesday!

This week is the third in a series on each of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding that form the foundation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

### STEP 3 – Discuss the importance and management of breastfeeding with pregnant women and their families.



All pregnant women must have basic information about breastfeeding, in order to make informed decisions.

- A review of 18 qualitative studies indicated that mothers generally feel that infant feeding is not discussed enough in the prenatal period and that there is not enough discussion of what to expect with breastfeeding.
- Mothers want more practical information about breastfeeding. Pregnancy is a key time to inform women about the importance of breastfeeding, support their decision-making and pave the way for their understanding of the maternity care practices that facilitate its success.
- Mothers also need to be informed that birth practices have a significant impact on the establishment of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding education should include information on the importance of breastfeeding and the risks of giving formula or other breast-milk substitutes, along with national and health professional recommendations for infant feeding. Practical skills such as positioning and attachment, on-demand feeding, and recognizing feeding cues are a necessary component of prenatal counseling. Families should be presented with up-to-date information on best practices in facilities providing maternity and newborn services regarding skin-to-skin contact, initiation of breastfeeding, supplementation protocols and rooming-in. Women also need to be informed about possible challenges they might encounter (such as engorgement, or a perception of not producing enough milk) and how to address them.

Interpersonal counseling, either one-on-one or in small groups, is important to allow women to discuss their feelings, doubts and questions about infant feeding. While education may be provided by a variety of different learning modes including videos, podcasts, texts, etc., meaningful prenatal breastfeeding conversations must be tailored to the individual needs of the woman and her family, addressing any concerns and questions they have. This counseling needs to be sensitively given and consider the social and cultural context of each family.

The aim of breastfeeding counseling is to empower women to breastfeed, while respecting their personal situations and wishes.

Next week we'll talk about Step 4 which is about skin to skin and supporting breastfeeding in the "golden hour."

References: Above text from the 6th Edition of the BFUSA Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria. Baby-Friendly-GEC-Final.pdf (babyfriendlyusa.org)

For more information contact

Cara Gerhardt, BSN RN IBCLC, coordinator @high5kansas.org