

FAQ

How much does going Baby Friendly cost?

UNICEF UK is a charity dependent entirely on voluntary contributions from our donors. The charges we make for assessments and training are kept as low as possible – they are based on actual costs to UNICEF and involve no element of profit.

NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) estimates that the cost of implementing the Baby Friendly Initiative is met in just three years, owing to increased breastfeeding rates reducing the incidence of gastroenteritis, respiratory infections and otitis media in babies. However, the cost savings are likely to be much larger due to reduced treatment costs for a wide range of illnesses that are reduced by increased breastfeeding.

What about bottle-feeding mothers?

The Baby Friendly Initiative requires that staff take the time to discuss infant feeding with all mothers so that they are able to make an informed decision about how they feed their baby. If a mother chooses to bottle feed, then minimum standards for her care (such as encouraging skin contact after delivery, keeping mothers and babies together and ensuring that mothers know how to prepare a bottle feed) are ensured as part of the Baby Friendly standards.

Does it take a lot more staff time?

Staff time is used differently. Providing antenatal education and teaching mothers how to breastfeed takes more time than not doing these things at all. However, time is saved as mothers are less likely to have problems such as sore nipples, engorged breasts and feeding difficulties.



Promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding – An introduction to the Baby Friendly Initiative

The Baby Friendly Initiative

Breastfeeding has numerous benefits for both mother and baby and yet breastfeeding rates in the UK are among the lowest in the world. Lack of knowledge and understanding of why breastfeeding is important and how it works can prevent mothers from starting breastfeeding or can lead to them stopping early because of problems that they are unable to overcome.

The Baby Friendly Initiative, a global programme of the World Health Organization and UNICEF, encourages health services to improve the care provided to mothers and babies so that they are able to start and continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish.

“After he was born, the midwife encouraged me to hold him against my skin for ages. He was really calm and just looking at me like he knew I was his mum.” *Mother who gave birth at a Baby Friendly hospital*

How do health-care facilities become Baby Friendly?

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative sets minimum standards for the care of mothers and babies and provides education, materials and support to help health-care facilities to implement these. Once all the standards are in place, facilities can be assessed and accredited as Baby Friendly. Accreditation lasts for two to five years, at which point reassessment is required.

What makes a health-care facility Baby Friendly?

UNICEF UK has set minimum standards for maternity hospitals and community health-care facilities, as well as for universities providing education for midwives and health visitors.

Hospitals and community health-care facilities must develop a breastfeeding policy and train all their staff in its implementation. Pregnant women must be offered education on infant feeding and new mothers supported to learn how to breastfeed and care for their babies. Practices that may harm breastfeeding, such as separating mothers and babies and giving breastfeeding babies bottles of infant formula, should be avoided unless there is a clinical need. Mothers should be told about support available to them in the community, and community health-care facilities should provide additional services to support mothers to continue breastfeeding.

Universities can become Baby Friendly by incorporating learning outcomes into their training curricula which ensure that students have the skills and knowledge to support breastfeeding mothers adequately.

Does it work?

Hospitals which have achieved Baby Friendly accreditation have demonstrated a 10 per cent average increase in the proportion of babies breastfed at birth, and at seven days 28 per cent more babies are still enjoying the health benefits of being breastfed than those born in hospitals that have not been accredited.

“The health visitor really kept me going, reassuring me that I could breastfeed and introducing me to other breastfeeding mums. I would have stopped without her.”
Mother in Baby Friendly area



Baby Friendly accreditation increases breastfeeding initiation rates by 10 per cent in maternity hospitals

Over 250 health-care facilities across the UK have or are working towards Baby Friendly accreditation

Breastfeeding helps to protect mother and baby against a wide range of diseases and infections

All four UK Departments of Health recommend the implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative